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SHORT

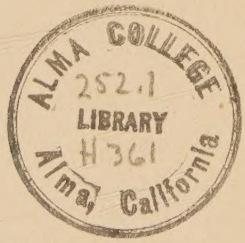
SERMONS FOR LOW MASSES

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS AND SOME FEAST DAYS OF THE YEAR

BY

F. HEFFNER

PRIEST OF THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN ORDER



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CONTENTS.

PAGE.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.
He who digs a Pit for Another falls into it Himself..... 1

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.
The Thought of Death..... 3

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.
The Kingdom of Heaven suffers Violence..... 5

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost.
Do not delay Repentance..... 8

First Sunday of Advent.
The General Judgment..... 11

Second Sunday of Advent.
Telling the Truth..... 13

Third Sunday of Advent.
Who is your God?..... 16

Fourth Sunday of Advent.
Prepare the Way of the Lord.. 19

The Nativity of Our Lord.
Let us go to Bethlehem..... 21

Sunday in the Octave of Christmas.
The Salvation of the Soul..... 24

New Year's Day.
Wishes for the New Year.... 26

Epiphany Sunday.
The Gifts which we should offer to Jesus..... 29

First Sunday after Epiphany.
The Obedience of Children.... 31

Second Sunday after Epiphany.
The Married State and the Grace of God..... 34

Third Sunday after Epiphany.
The Soul to be cared for rather than the Body..... 37

Sentuagesima Sunday.
Become Rich in Good Works.. 40

Sexagesima Sunday.
The Seed and the Soil..... 43

PAGE.

Quinquagesima Sunday.
Jesus Crucified anew by our Sins 46

First Sunday of Lent.
Temptations 48

Second Sunday of Lent.
The Joys of Heaven..... 51

Third Sunday of Lent.
Cast out the Devil by a good Confession 54

Fourth Sunday of Lent.
Perseverance 57

Passion Sunday.
Woe to the House deserted by God 60

Palm Sunday.
Reverence to the Blessed Sacrament 62

Easter.
This is the Day which the Lord hath made 65

Low Sunday.
Peace of the Soul..... 68

Second Sunday after Easter.
The Good Shepherd..... 72

Third Sunday after Easter.
A Bad Conscience..... 75

Fourth Sunday after Easter.
The Journey into Eternity.... 78

Fifth Sunday after Easter.
God our Father..... 81

Sixth Sunday after Easter.
Scandal-taking 84

Whit-Sunday.
Fiery Tongues 87

Trinity Sunday.
The Most Holy Trinity..... 90

Second Sunday after Pentecost.
The Holy Eucharist..... 93

Third Sunday after Pentecost.
God's Mercy 96

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.
Wealth a Danger to the Soul.. 99

PAGE.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.
Anger 102
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.
Almsgiving 104
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.
The Barren Fig-tree..... 107
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.
A Good Conscience and a Good Name 110
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.
The Tears of Christ..... 112
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.
The Right Sort of Prayer.... 115
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.
The Habitual Sinner..... 118
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.
Adversity brings the Soul back to God..... 120
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
Bad Company..... 124
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
Divine Providence..... 127

PAGE.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
Preparation for Death..... 130
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
The Opinion of the World.... 133
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God 136
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
In Time of Sickness..... 139
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
Think frequently of Judgment. 142
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.
Maladies of the Soul..... 145
Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.
Your Conversion must be Sincere 147
Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.
Submission to the Will of God. 150

A Table of Synopses.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (page 1).
He who digs a pit for his neighbor falls into it himself. The Pharisees, desiring to entrap our Saviour in His speech, were caught in their own trap. Absalom another example. How this truth applies to us.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (page 3).
The thought of death. As warriors practise for war in days of peace, so should we prepare for death in days of health and vigor. Arsenius. The words of Sirach.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (page 5).
The kingdom of heaven suffers violence. We can only attain heaven by hard and strenuous labor. Two reasons for this:
I. To remind us that this world is not our true home;
II. To become worthy of reward. Even our Lord entered into glory through cross and suffering, how may we expect a better lot?

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (page 8).
Do not delay repentance. The meaning of the words in the gospel, "pray that your flight be not in winter." Winter, in human life, is the time of infirmity and old age. "Or on the Sabbath," the end of man's life. The folly of people who hope to repent in old age or on their deathbeds.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (page 11).
The general judgment. Nothing better calculated to inspire us with fear and horror than the thought of judgment. Let us anticipate the judgment by a sincere confession and repentance.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (page 13).
Telling the truth. John put in prison because he told the truth. This imprisonment rather an honor than dishonor. How different we are. We are too often afraid to defend the holy truths of our Church for fear of ill-will or ridicule.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (page 16).
Who is your God? The Jesus sent to John the Baptist to inquire whether he was the Messiah, because they were displeased with the severe teachings of Christ, and wished to proclaim John the Messiah. Are not you also finding fault with the true Messiah and His laws? Do not some of you also dethrone in your hearts the true God, and place false idols in His place?

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (page 19).
Prepare the way of the Lord. How to do this. Martha's example not the right one. Do not confine your care to outward appearances; cleanse and adorn yourself in the first place. A mirror for our souls.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD (page 21).
Let us go to Bethlehem. The words of St. Bernard. Behold our Lord in privation and poverty. How does this spectacle affect our hearts? If the holy infant would seek shelter in our midst, would it be found with you? How do you treat those that come in His name, the poor?

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS (page 24).
The salvation of the soul. Another year has passed. What have we done for our salvation during that year? St. Paul. (Eph. v. 15, 16). A custom on the island of Crete. Repent, make your peace with God.

NEW YEAR'S DAY (page 26).
Wishes for the New Year. Begin a NEW year in justice and holiness. As a new year's present I give you Jesus Christ. Learn from Him to lead a holy life. The new year may be the last of your life. Make good use of it.

EPIPHANY SUNDAY (page 29).
The gifts which we should offer to Jesus. Our Lord does not require material gifts, but He sends us the poor and needy to appeal to our charity. He who has promised that not even a drink of water given to the thirsty shall go unrewarded will repay you a hundredfold for your acts of charity.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (page 31).
The obedience of children. The example of the divine child. St. Ephraim's warning to disobedient children. The importance of the Fourth Commandment. Punishment for disobedient children.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (page 34).
The married state and the grace of God. Take care that the spiritual wine, the grace of God, is not wanting in the married state. Many weddings of our times neglect to provide for this wine. Young people in preparing for marriage do not always consult the will of God and His laws. Those that only consult their passion and temporal interests are bound to find their union an unhappy one. The proper way.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (page 37).
The soul to be cared for rather than the body. The leper in the gospel first gave thought to his soul, because he first adored our Lord, and only then asked to be made clean of body. Solomon. St. Augustine. Cardinal Hosius. Is your soul the slave of your flesh?

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY (page 40).
Become rich in good works. Faith without works is dead. The parable of the foolish virgins. The light of faith must be nourished with the oil of good works. Opportunity to do good offers itself every day. Do we not too often let it pass?

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY (page 43).
The seed and the soil. The seed of the divine word sowed abundantly, but it bears little fruit. Where is the fault? Not in the seed, not in the sower, but in the soil. The faithful of the early Church, very zealous to practise their faith notwithstanding their great difficulties. It is made so convenient for us, but where is our zeal? The word of God listened to indifferently, or not at all. And even those who listen attentively do not always heed it.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY (page 46).
Jesus crucified anew by our sins. How very few of us take this truth to heart. Our Christians hear what is preached to them of the love of Jesus, of His bitter passion and death, of the divine work of their redemption, but their hearts remain cold. By their sensuality, intemperance, or other vices they crucify anew their best friend, their redeemer. St. Francis. Origines: sin can not flourish where the bitter death of Christ is remembered.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (page 48).

Temptations. When we are most frequently tempted, and by what means we must overcome our temptations. The devil did not tempt Christ until after He had spent forty days in fasting and praying. So does the devil in our days. It is those who diligently work their salvation who are most tempted by him. Do not be troubled, therefore, if you are subject to violent temptations. Only those who are free from temptations have cause to worry. The means to overcome temptations.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (page 51).

The joys of heaven. If the Apostle Peter was so enchanted on Mount Thabor at a glance of the glories of heaven, how great must be the rapture of the Blessed in beholding God in all His glory. The thought of the joys of heaven a powerful means to enable us to patiently bear the hardships of this life. The thought of heaven fortified the Martyrs. Look up to heaven in your troubles and you will find strength to bear up with them for Christ's sake.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (page 54).

Cast out the devil by a good confession. Anybody in the state of mortal sin, possessed by the devil. The requisites for worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance. The necessity to confess sins. Other requirements. Make a full, open, and repentant confession in these days.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (page 57).

Perseverance. The five thousand people in the desert followed Christ out of curiosity rather than to work their salvation. So long as He supplied them with food and drink, as He cured their sick, they followed Him, but soon after they murmured, "This saying is hard, and who can bear it?" and left our Saviour. Do we not behave in like manner? In times of prosperity we are satisfied to praise and bless God, but in misfortune we are only too ready to complain. Thomas and Peter. Let us serve God not only in times of prosperity, but also in adversity.

PASSION SUNDAY (page 60).

Woe to the house deserted by God. Woe to the soul that has lost God's sanctifying grace. The deluge. Sodom and Gomorrha. Jerusalem. The misery of the soul without sanctifying grace.

PALM SUNDAY (page 62).

Reverence to the Blessed Sacrament. How we should manifest it. King Darius. Moses. Exterior reverence. Interior reverence. Purify your heart of sin, so that our Lord may enter your heart and dwell therein.

EASTER (page 65).

This is the day which the Lord hath made. The sun makes the day—Christ the sun of justice. On this day Christ won victory over death, sin, and hell. The day the time for awakening: awake from the stupor of sin.

LOW SUNDAY (page 68).

Peace of the soul. The Sacrament of Penance the means to obtain this peace. Means to avoid relapse into sin. Remember in what state you were as a sinner. How different the condition of a justified soul. Frequent renewal of resolutions. Frequent use of the means of grace.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (page 72).

The good Shepherd. Christ a master, warrior, tradesman, and shepherd. A shepherd. Shepherds the first to adore Him in a stable. Going about to gather the stray sheep. Instituting St. Peter as shepherd. A good shepherd, because He has done so much for His sheep. Are we able to say that we belong to the good sheep of Christ? Requisites of a good sheep.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (page 75).

A bad conscience. It has no joy. Cain. David. Own experience. Apparent peace with bad conscience a bad sign.

(For the rest of the sermons in this volume a synopsis will be found prefixed to each of them.)

Short Sermons for Low Masses.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"And they consulted among themselves, how to ensnare Jesus in his speech."—Matt. xxii. 15.

An old proverb says: "He who digs a pit for his neighbor falls into it himself." How true this is, we may learn from the Pharisees. They wanted to entrap our Saviour in His speech, and instead they were caught themselves. They could not answer His question and went away confused. This sort of thing happens every day, and it not seldom happens that where people dig a pit they fall into it themselves. A friend of holy Job who tried to comfort him in his misery said to him one day: "He catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked" (Job v. 13). He wished to say that there were people who consider themselves so smart and so clever that they think it impossible that any one should see through their plans and designs, much less to hinder them and bring them to naught.

Such people resemble the Pharisees who took counsel how they should ensnare Jesus in His speech and find occasion to accuse Him. They agreed to ask Him the question whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not. Had the Saviour answered no, it is not lawful, they would have accused Him of being an enemy of Cæsar's and He would have been put to death. Had He said yes, it is lawful, then they would have told the people that He was a friend of the Romans, whose dominion over the Jews was resented by them, and He would on this account have lost favor with them. But they miscalculated. "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them" (Ps. ii. 4). "He catcheth the wise in their craftiness and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked." The Pharisees who wished to ensnare Jesus in His speech were ensnared themselves and in their wickedness brought to shame. Christ saw through and penetrated their knavery. Therefore He said: "Why do ye tempt me, ye hypocrites? Show me the coin of the tribute." And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They

said to him: Cæsar's. Then he saith to them, "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

See, dear Christians, the Pharisees fell into the pit themselves which they had dug for our Saviour. To prove the truth of this, that those who dig a pit for others fall into it themselves, I could give you many other examples from Holy Writ and history, but I will merely show you two.

It is well known that Absalom deposed his father David from the throne and took away his dominion from him. To accomplish this he had recourse to every kind of intrigue. He was condescending and friendly to everybody, inquired about each one's concerns, and like a hypocrite professed sympathy for the people, who were, he said, being badly governed by his father, and hinted that if he were on the throne things would be different and greatly improved. By such talk he made his father hated by the people, and himself beloved. To draw the people still more toward himself, he made it known that in his zeal he made a vow for the faith of his fathers, and he went on a pilgrimage. He went really to incite the people whom he met on the way against his father. His scheme succeeded, a rebellion took place, and Absalom placed himself at its head. David's army was defeated and he himself driven out of the city. However, Absalom's reign did not last long. The faithful rallied round David, Absalom was defeated, and during his flight was caught by the hair in the branches of an oak tree. While hanging there he was transpierced by a lance at the hands of Joab. Those who dig a pit for others fall into it themselves.

This truth was also experienced by one Marius, who rose from the ranks of the Roman army to be an emperor. Marius was an armorer and served as a common soldier in the army. After becoming emperor he reigned only one day, and then he was murdered. His murderer while slaying him cried out:

"This is a sword which you made yourself."

Oh, how many must say this! You complain, O Christian, that your fellow-Christians ill-treat you; but ask yourself if it is not your own fault; whether you did not yourself make the sword which your brethren are turning against you. You complain because no one places confidence in you; but examine if you have not fallen into the pit which you dug for others. You say you have so many enemies; but just consider for a moment: have you not

by your behavior made enemies? You sigh under the heavy cross which is laid upon your shoulders; but think well over it if you have not made it yourself. If you think it over carefully, you will find that there is a great deal of truth in the proverb: He who digs a pit for another falls into it himself.

Very well, my dear Christians. For the future let us give to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar and to God what belongs to God; give unto each his own.—Give unto the Lord thy God honor and obedience and to your fellow-men charity and honesty. If you walk each day in the way of the commandments of God, you will not only please God, but you will also please your fellow-men and be worthy of praise for evermore. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Lord, my daughter is even now dead."—Matt. ix. 18.

The gospel of to-day brings us to the corpse of a young girl, the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, and reminds us that one day we must all die. "And as it is appointed for men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27), the best thing we can do is to strive to die well. St. Augustine teaches us in a few words how we can do this when he says: "So as to be able to die well once, die always." We will think over these words to-day. To arouse the Corinthians to a careful preparation for the hour of death, St. Paul draws their attention to his own behavior and says: "I die daily, by your glory, brethren" (I. Cor. xv. 31). Without doubt this saying will appear strange to you, and you will ask: How can the apostle say, "I die daily," when experience teaches us that man can only die once?

Before answering this question I will relate to you what the Roman youths used to do in olden times. So as to practice in their youth riding, wrestling and fighting, the Romans had wooden horses made, which they placed in winter in the garrets and in summer in the open air. On these horses the boys and young men had to practice for war. They had to jump on horseback with and without arms, and to learn how to use their weapons while unhorsed. So in times of peace they learned how to fight and defend themselves, that they might be ready in time of necessity. Now you will

understand why the apostle says "I die daily." He knew well that he could only die once, but to be able at that last moment to fight and die, he practiced dying every day—that is to say, he thought daily on death, and prepared himself for it.

My dear Christian, imitate the apostle. Think every day on death, and so live as you would wish to have lived at the hour of your death.

How profitable it is to think of death daily, and to prepare one's self for it was well experienced by the pious Abbot Arsenius. He lived at the court of the Emperor Theodosius and enjoyed his favor and confidence. Although he took part in the pleasures of the court like any other worldly person, still he did not neglect the Holy Scriptures. As he was reading the Psalms one day, these words: "Who is the man that shall live and not see death?" (Ps. lxxxviii. 49), he was struck, and instantly made up his mind to leave the court, renounce the pleasures of the world, and retire into solitude, there to meditate upon death, and to prepare himself for it. This resolution he at once put into execution, and gave himself up to a life of penance and mortification. Finally, when the hour of his death approached he was not sad and fearful, as the children of this world are, but he was full of joy and desire for the moment of dissolution. The patriarch Theophilus, who stood at his dying bed, said to him:

"Thou art blessed, Father Arsenius, because the hour of death has always been present to thee."

And Arsenius made answer:

"Yes, indeed. Blessed are those who will do as I did, for it is written: 'By all thy works, think of thy last end, and thou wilt never sin.' "

He died soon after.

Dear Christians, have you heard and understood what Paul and Arsenius did every day? That both of them thought daily on death, and through that remembrance they died a blessed death?—Go thou and do likewise! Die daily, so as to learn the great art of how to die a blessed death, and study to make yourselves able and fit to fight the battle with death whenever it shall come. Nothing is more profitable than the daily remembrance of death. "The thought of death," writes St. Ephrem, "overcomes passion, brings virtue and reward, and removes the sting of death."

What a powerful remedy for all sin and sensuality the thought

of death is, even the pagans have acknowledged. For instance, the heathen legislator, Lycurgus, ordered that all the graveyards should be in the center of the cities and villages. When it was pointed out to him that by so doing sickness and pestilence would rage, he said:

"It is better for my subjects, by the remembrance of death and the grave, to become sick in body and that their souls should be healthy than that they should be sound in body, but sick in soul."

The sight of a grave reminds one of death, and the thought of death frightens us from sinning and animates us to do good.

Yes, dear Christians, the thought of death and the grave is a powerful remedy for all sins and the best incentive to virtue and the fear of the Lord. Therefore the wise Sirach warns you: "In all thy works, remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Sir. vii. 40). To keep this thought ever wakeful and alert, the pious Pope Innocent carried about with him at all times two little tablets with the symbols of death on them. On the one a skull was represented and on the other a grave. The Pope gazed frequently during the day upon these tablets, and was through them moved at all times to do and to omit that which he would wish to have done or omitted when lying on his death-bed. Go, thou, and do likewise, dear Christian! Think frequently of death and the grave, especially in the hour of temptation, and you will perceive a beneficial effect for time and eternity. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven."—Matt. xiii. 33.

It was customary with the Persians that before the coronation of a king, he was made to drink a goblet of sour milk. And in this way does Christ treat His chosen children, whom He will one day crown with glory, as heirs of His Father's kingdom. But they must first drink a goblet of sour milk—that is to say, they will only attain heaven by hard and strenuous labor. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and only the violent carry it away. Therefore, is it compared in to-day's gospel to a bitter mustard seed or sour leaven, not that heaven itself is hard and sour, for in that

case no one would want to go there, but that those who want to get to heaven will beforehand have to endure many bitter and unpleasant hardships. This truth we will examine more closely to-day, and learn two reasons why the path to heaven is so beset with hardships.

(1.) The first reason—why all those who are striving for eternal life have to suffer so many troubles and cares is this: that we are only strangers here on earth journeying to our Father's home. When one is away from home one has to put up with a great many unpleasant things. If we are unfairly treated, or persecuted or scorned, we must be silent and not even resent it. The stay in strange parts has many drawbacks, and causes us all the more to long for home. When the prodigal son had wasted his inheritance in foreign parts and began to feel want, then he remembered the abundance in his home and said: "I will arise and will go to my father."

If in this world we had all our wishes gratified and had nothing to suffer, who would then strive for heaven? Very few, doubtless. Daily experience at least teaches us that those who are endowed with the riches of this world and whose every wish is gratified seldom or ever think of God, or heaven, or of their eternal salvation. And even when we know by experience that this world is a vale of tears and a place of suffering and misery, we are loath to leave it and afraid to die. What would happen if things went fairly well with us and we had not to taste the bitterness of life? It is just this bitterness which nearly every day brings with it that is ordained by God to preserve us from a too great attachment to the things of this world, and to give us a distaste for earthly pleasures and enjoyments that we may not forget eternity through that which is transitory.

If you want a confirmation of this truth, consider what the Jews had to put up with in Egypt. They were so badly treated and trodden down, the yoke of servitude was so hard to bear and so insupportable, that day and night they sought the Lord that He might deliver them from it. God permitted this heavy burden laid upon them that they might have such a disgust and aversion for the land of Egypt that all the more ardently would they long for the land of Canaan which He had promised them. So does God deal with His chosen ones: he lets a perfect flood of miseries overtake them some-

times, that thereby they may all the more eagerly strive for eternal life and its bliss.

(2.) God places, secondly, so many crosses and sorrows in our path that we may thereby become worthy of heaven, which is a reward only for those who, by struggling and striving and the patient endurance of the trials of this life, have deserved to win it. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed." The mustard seed will bring tears to our eyes by its sharpness, but it is wholesome for our stomach and our head. And so it is compared to the kingdom of heaven. It costs us, indeed, many troubles and hardships, but it prepares for us an everlasting happiness. This is a truth which the children of this world do not understand.

Upon one occasion our blessed Lord said to His apostles, clearly and distinctly: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. And after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again." And they understood none of these things: and this word was hid from them; and they understood not the things that were said (Luke xviii. 31).

And even to-day the meaning of this is not understood. When we are told that to gain heaven we must suffer persecution and oppression, shame and injustice, pain and sorrow; that we must bear them with patience, without murmuring or complaining; that we must return good for evil—the children of this world cannot understand this, but if, on the contrary, you say, try to avoid as much as possible all unpleasantness and have a good time; do not permit anyone to offend or ill-treat you, but take revenge on your enemy—why, they find that quite natural. Even the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not seem to understand that all must suffer trials and sorrows who wish to enter the kingdom of heaven. Their risen Saviour, who appeared to them in the form of a stranger, said to them: "Oh foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 25, 26).

If then, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, entered into glory by the cross and suffering, how can we, His disciples and servants, expect a better lot? Is the disciple more than the Master or the servant more than his lord? And our Lord said at another time:

"Whoso wishes to be my disciple, must deny himself daily, and take up his cross and follow me. Whosoever will not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." This is certainly a hard saying, a bitter and a sharp mustard seed for the children of this world, who only think of sensual things and earthly pleasures. The children of God have always followed their Lord and Master in His way of the cross, and have rejoiced in tribulations because they knew that thereby they were tried as gold in the furnace, so as to be made worthy to enter into the kingdom of heaven. So, for instance, the Emperor Mauritius, who, with his wife and children, was put to death, exclaimed at every stroke of the executioner: "Thou art just, O Lord, and just are all Thy judgments."

Now, dear Christians, you see why our Lord gives us to taste in this life the sharp mustard seed of suffering and tribulation. He wishes thereby to remind us constantly that we are here below in a strange country, and that we must long ardently and strive eagerly for our home above in His kingdom; and, on the other hand, he tries and purifies us, and gives us the opportunity to gain merit for heaven. Let us resolve, therefore, for the future, when trials beset us, to bear them with patience from the hand of God and with submission. So long as God sends us trials, we may be certain of his love, for it is said: "Those whom the Lord loves he chastises." Let us make use of afflictions for our salvation, and say with Judas Machabeus: "What the Lord's will is in heaven, so let it happen." Amen.

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath."
Matt. xxiv. 20.

The abomination of desolation of which our Saviour speaks in to-day's gospel, as many theologians think, is a figure of mortal sin, which indeed desolates the soul of man and plunges it into ruin; and they say that by winter and the Sabbath two different times are understood in which flight from sin might be dangerous and in vain. Therefore, it is best not to postpone our repentance. Let us consider this further.

(1.) When any one wishes to flee before an enemy or to escape ruin, winter is not the right season. The days then are short and

stormy, and one can only advance slowly on the way. The word *Winter* has reference to the time which a sick person has when death is near: it is only too often too short, and it is hard—nay, often impossible, to accomplish the serious affair of repentance. When sickness overtakes persons they do not think it will end in death, and will not hear of receiving the sacraments. One day follows another; they hope to get better, but in vain. When at last weakness takes the upper hand and the harbinger of death makes its appearance, then they ask the patient whether he will receive the last sacraments. The priest comes; finds the sick man neither prepared for confession nor able, through weakness, to remember his sins or to awaken repentance for them. Indeed, it oftens happens that the patient has already lost consciousness and the power of speech when the priest arrives. How can you imagine, my dear Christians, that such a man, sick unto death, can confess his sins in the right and proper way? Can he, weak, dazed, and racked with pain and the fear of the judgment after death, make a good and perfect confession, and thereby expect the forgiveness of his sins? I doubt it. This is the reason why the evil one does all in his power to hinder such a person from being converted.

(2.) The other time which Christ admonishes man not to flee is the Sabbath. Such a Sabbath is the end of man's life. The Sabbath is a day of rest from work. On the Sabbath the Jews were forbidden to cook, or travel, or to do any other work. And man must take a holiday, whether he likes it or not, when the last hour comes. The work and pains of his life are over, and the day of rest is dawning for soul and body. And if, as we have just said, he can no longer confess and do penance, he must leave this earth without having accomplished the most important work of his life, the affair of his salvation.

God has certainly promised that He will receive the sinner into His favor at whatever hour he will confess his sins and be sorry for them. But He has not promised that He will give us time for this, and many are deceived with the hope that they will have time to do penance, either in their old age or on their death-bed. They console themselves, in fact, with the words of Holy Scripture in which the endless mercy of God is praised, while at the same time they take no notice that the Scripture says God is ready to show grace and mercy to the sinner when he repents. But no man has the assurance that God will give him the time to repent. Neither do

they take notice that the same Holy Writ says that death comes suddenly, like a thief in the night, and no man knows the day or the hour. If you would only pay attention to the daily happenings you would be convinced that frequently men die suddenly, without receiving the last sacraments.

It is said that Archias, the tyrant of Thebes, was once warned by a friend in a letter against his enemies, and the messenger begged him to read the letter at once, because it contained important news. Archias would not do it, but said: "To-morrow I will occupy myself with important matters." In the following night, however, he was killed by his enemies. And so it is with many sinners.

God sends us also, if I may say so, a letter, and allows us through the inner promptings of the Holy Ghost, by sermons and our confessor, by our parents and friends, a warning to avoid sin and its fearful consequences, and to bring us to penance and conversion. In spite of this, most people say: "To-morrow, to-morrow is time enough for repentance and confession." They talk like this from day to day, and are suddenly surprised by death and delivered over to their infernal enemy.

Take this to heart, my dear Christians! What has happened to this one and that one can also happen to you if you continue stiff-necked and unbending in your impenitence, and put off from one day to another your conversion. Harden not your hearts on this, the last day of the Church's year, when you hear the voice of the Lord, who calls you to repentance! Do not put yourselves in danger of dying in your sins impenitent and damned for all eternity! Save your immortal soul which was bought by the precious blood of Jesus!

Dear Christians! Let this be our resolution to-day, when we close the ecclesiastical year: In the coming week we will examine our conscience and repent of our sins, and in the new year of the Church, which begins next Sunday, by a sincere confession obtain the forgiveness of our sins. The new ecclesiastical year we will devote to the good of our soul, so that if we should be surprised therein by death we shall not be afraid of dying in sin and being lost. May we have strength to do this, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

"Men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world."—Luke xxi. 26.

Beloved in the Lord! On this Sunday, the first in Advent, the Church reads to us the gospel which treats of the second coming of Christ to judge us, that we may prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ the Redeemer of mankind and profit by the graces and fruits of His passion. For, although the Messiah has come whom the Saints of the old law longed to see, and the work of our redemption has been made perfect, we are still not all free from sin and the children of God. Many are wandering in the paths of ungodliness; they live carelessly and indifferently in their sins, and would be lost forever if they had to appear suddenly before the judgment seat of Christ. To prevent this and to encourage her children by a sincere repentance to prepare themselves worthily for the holy feast of Christmas, the Church to-day reminds us *of the awful day of the last judgment*, of which I also will speak to-day. May the Lord bless our meditation.

It is related of a certain king that he was always sad, and even in the midst of the most joyous festivities he could not shake off this feeling of sadness. When he was asked one day by his brother why he went about with such a troubled expression, he answered: "I am always thinking of the day of judgment, and the just Judge is ever present to my mind, to whom I must give an exact account, not only of my actions, but also of every thought and word. This causes me so much anxiety that I cannot be cheerful." And, in fact, my dear Christians, there is nothing more calculated to inspire us with fear and horror than the thought of the judgment of God. Not only the living on earth, but also the inhabitants of hell will tremble with fear, when at the last day the mighty sound of the trumpet will pierce the graves, and the cry of the angel will be heard: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" We can understand somewhat the awful fear and anxiety which will take possession of all men on that day, when we consider what Saul underwent, as he, after the death of Samuel, was beaten back by the Philistines, who were much more numerous, and he waited to know the outcome of the battle. By the advice of his followers he went to consult a witch at Endor, and asked her to raise up the ghost of Samuel.

Samuel's spirit appeared, and Saul fell down with fear, for he thought he saw his judge (I. Kings xxviii.). If Saul was so frightened at a spirit, what will be the fear of the ungodly when the voice cries out: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" When the Apostles Peter, James, and John saw Christ transfigured on Mount Thabor, they were so afraid that they threw themselves down on their faces. The fear of the Judge will be very much greater, for the Judge, as St. Paul says, "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I. Cor. iv. 5).

That is announced already by the prophet Isaias, when he says: "For the Lord shall judge by fire" (Is. lxvi. 16). In this life many a deceiver is considered honest, many an unchaste person virtuous, many a miser economical; in a word, many ungodly and vicious men pass for good and honest who, at the last day, will be found to be nothing of the kind. God will judge by fire, that is to say, he will expose the most hidden sins and passions and cause all men to stand in the right light, so that the whole world will say: "Look at that man whom we thought so virtuous and godfearing, see how black his soul is! Then the hyprocite will cry out for shame, "Fall upon us, ye mountains, and cover us, ye hills!"

There, O sinner, there at the judgment everything will be brought to light; there your bad thoughts will be made known, your shameful lust, your bad conversations and actions; there you will have to give an account of the good works which you ought to have done but which, through laziness or wickedness, you have not done.

Christian parents! there, the just Judge will demand the souls of your children at your hands. You seducers of innocence, you scandal givers, there all those will arise against you, whom you have seduced, whom you have scandalized, and they will be your accusers before the Judge. There the poor, the widows and orphans, the downtrodden, and the persecuted will arise against their persecutors and their oppressors, and the goods acquired wrongfully, which they possessed during this life, will burn like fire in their hands.

From this, my dear Christians, you can form an idea of the magnitude of the horror and the fear with which the sinner and the ungodly will then be seized. In the excess of their anxiety and

affliction they will cry out: "Fall upon us, ye mountains, and cover us, ye hills!" But all in vain; they will be unable to flee before the angry face of the Judge, and they must submit to His awful sentence of damnation. It is related of the holy abbot, St. Hilary, that in the last moments of his life he thus addressed his departing soul: "The moment has arrived when you must leave this perishable body. Depart, then, O my soul! Why are you afraid? You have served God faithfully for seventy long years, and you are afraid of death?" As he said this he died. Dear Christians! If so holy a man, who had served God faithfully for seventy years, was afraid of death and the judgment, how great, then, will be the fear of those who, on their death bed, look back over their past life and acknowledge that they have hardly served God in the right way, even for a few days or hours, the rest of their time being devoted to serving the world, and vanity, and the devil! "And if the just man shall scarcely be saved," says St. Peter, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (I. Peter iv. 18). Ah! then it is too late to mend matters, for the time we have wasted here below neither prayers nor tears will avail us! The time for mercy has ceased, and God in His severity lets His just punishment prevail.

Let us, therefore, my dear Christians, conclude with the words of St. Thomas of Villanova: "Let us anticipate the judgment by a sincere confession and repentance. Let us weep over our sins now that we may not have to do so then for all eternity! Let us beseech our Lord that He may mercifully spare us at the day of judgment and turn away His punishments from us!" Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

"Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples."—Matt. xi. 2.

As our Saviour one day passed a man born blind, His disciples asked Him: "Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (John ix. 2). And so may we ask ourselves to-day when the Gospel tells us that John was in prison, who had sinned, he or his parents, that he should be in prison? His parents did not sin, for the Gospel says of them: "Both were just before

God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame" (Luke i. 6). Had John sinned then, and thereby deserved the punishment of prison? That is not possible, because Jesus, who is the eternal truth, who never praised a sinner, says of him in to-day's Gospel: "I tell you he is more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: Behold I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." What wrong had John done? Why is he thrown into prison? I answer briefly: He had spoken the truth, that is why he is in prison. Let us then to-day meditate further over this for our edification.

The following fable is related in old books: Thieves broke into a farm house, but found no other booty but a half-starved rooster, which they wanted to strangle and take away with them. The rooster said beseechingly, Don't hurt me, for I am an unoffending animal; I have a hard life, and am faithful to my trust, for every night I announce the time, and let the people know when they should get up. For that very reason, said the thief, you must die, because by your crowing you awaken the people, and prevent us from stealing. So it was with St. John. He was a true watchman who in the dark days of the Old Testament announced the coming dawn of the redemption, and told the people to arise from the stupor of sin and to repent. His voice resounded so powerfully in the wilderness, that the people from all parts, from the towns, and villages, ran to him and asked what they should do to be saved. He told each one without timidity. He had even the courage to tell this to King Herod, which holy Job considers so remarkable that he asks: "Who shall reprove his way to his face?" (Job xxi. 31). Herod had taken his brother's wife Herodias and lived with her as his wife. For this reason John censured him with bitter words, and said to him: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." "But Herod, the tetrarch, when he was reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, he added this also above all, and shut up John in prison" (Luke iii. 19, 20).

John was thrown into prison because he was daring and spoke the truth openly to a king, and bade him break off the unlawful and scandalous relations with his brother's wife. This imprisonment was no dishonor to him; on the contrary, it gave him honor, great

honor. Joseph, the son of the Patriarch Jacob, could say when he was thrown into prison, "I am innocent, although thrown into this dungeon;" and the son of the high priest Zachary could say with even greater reason: "Because I wish to propagate good, to make the laws of God respected, because I admonished a prince who was a scandal to his subjects to lead a better life, for this reason am I robbed of my liberty and thrown into a dungeon."

Who can question it, dear Christians, that in these days few would be found who would bear witness to the truth, without fear of men, or without regard to their own detriment and loss? All wish to be good Catholic Christians, but when it comes to defending the truths of faith, or the laws and holy practices of the church, a great many keep silent for fear of derision or neglect or a temporary disadvantage. And how few take the trouble to speak, to prevent, or to punish when in their presence bad conversations are indulged in, or immodest songs sung, or any other misdemeanor is committed. How few there are who unmask the liar, stop the talk of the defamer and the calumniator, who dare to defend and save the honor of their fellow men when it is attacked. We are afraid to expose ourselves to our neighbor's ill will; we will not run the danger of being derided or suffering any other unpleasantness, and so we are silent, when we should speak. And how many parents there are who spoil their children, who do not correct and punish them as they should do, for fear of harming them? In a word, those who, like St. John the Baptist, bear witness to the truth openly are few in number. Oh, how shame-faced we stand there, when compared to that heroic man! He had the fear of death and a prison before him, and yet he spoke! And we are afraid of a cross look, or a slight humiliation, or a trifling temporal disadvantage. We are silent when we should bear witness to the truth! We do not think of the great misfortune, which will one day overtake us because we were silent when we should have spoken; we think not of the everlasting perdition which will be the lot of him who, in consideration of temporal disadvantage, is afraid to bear witness to the truth, and to be zealous for virtue and justice.

If you wish to avoid this awful fate, my dear Christians, you must begin at once to walk in the footsteps of St. John the Baptist. "Hearken to me, you that know what is just, my people who have

my law in your heart: fear ye not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies. For the worm shall eat them up as a garment; and the moth shall consume them as wool: but my salvation shall be forever, and my justice from generation to generation. Arise, arise, put on strength, O thou arm of the Lord: arise as in the days of old, in the ancient generations. I, I myself will comfort you. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man, and of the son of man, who shall wither away like grass?" (Isaias li.). In a word, "And fear not them that kill the body, but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt. x. 28). "When any one by advice, warning or correction, causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his ways, he shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (James v. 20.) Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

"The Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to him, to ask him: Who art thou?"—John i. 19.

To-day's Gospel tells us of a message. On the preceding Sunday we were told that John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Christ to ask Him if He was the Messiah whom the Jews had been expecting for thousands of years. According to the Gospel of to-day, the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John, to ask him the question: "Who are thou?" With this message we will occupy ourselves to-day and see what good we can learn therefrom.

The Fathers of the Church say that the Jews sent messengers to John the Baptist, in the wilderness, to obtain from him a positive answer as to whether he was the long-expected Messiah or not; and they had every reason to ask such a question, for the time had arrived when, according to the sayings of the prophets, the Messiah was to come, and, on the other hand, they saw that two powerful lights had arisen in the land, the glory of whose holiness spread in every direction—Jesus and John the Baptist. Both had been foretold by the prophets, both had been in a most wonderful manner announced by the Angel Gabriel and conceived by their mothers miraculously, both led an angelic life, both preached repentance, both had great authority over the people; but they were not certain which one they should give the preference and accept for the Messiah. Under these

circumstances the Jews at Jerusalem considered it advisable to send and ask John if he was the promised Messiah.

St. Chrysostom regards this message in another light. He says: The Jews, especially the high priests and theologians, had no reason to doubt which was the promised Messiah, Jesus or John, for they must have known from Holy Writ that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin of the house of David, in the town of Bethlehem; John, however, was born of Elizabeth, the wife of Zachary, of the priestly house of Levi, in the town of Hebron. They knew, also, that the Messiah would work many great miracles; John had not worked any miracles up to this time, but Christ had—He had already entered upon His public life and glorified it by many miracles. St. Chrysostom concluded from this that the Jews did not intend to find out whether John was the Messiah, but, because they were inimical to Jesus, who ruthlessly exposed their sensuality and their hypocrisy, they wanted to make the attempt to proclaim John as the Messiah, in the hope that he would be more lenient towards their sins and passions.

Old historians relate that the Egyptians had an ox called Apis, which they adored and which would dance to the sound of music. The Jews had often seen this during their sojourn in Egypt, and they thought about it when God, through Moses, gave them His strict commandments and laws. They did not like them and they forced Aaron to make them a god who would not give them any commandments, but let them do what they pleased. Then Aaron moulded them a golden calf and built an altar for it. This pleased the Jews and they brought sacrifices to it; "they sat down to eat and drink and they rose up to play" (Exodus xxxii. 6). The idol did not bother about them and let them do what they would. Something like this the Jews wanted to have now. They knew well that Christ was their Messiah and their King, but they were scandalized at Him because He was poor and insignificant and ruthlessly probed their sins and passions and punished them. That did not suit them—they wanted a Messiah who would let them do as they pleased, and they thought they would find such an one in John, who remained in the wilderness and did not come into their town, and who therefore had no opportunity to know of their sinful lives. Therefore they sent messengers to him with the intention that he should proclaim himself the Messiah.

Would to God that there were not so many Christians who behave no better than did these Jews, and who find fault, now here, now there, in the Messiah and His doctrines!

The liar and the calumniator would like to have a God who would not forbid lying and calumny; the unchaste would like a Christ who would allow all kinds of debauchery; the envious, the haughty, the irascible, the uncharitable—in a word, all those sinners—would like a Gospel that would allow them everything, that they might not be threatened with the pains of hell because they transgressed the laws of Christ. "All things," says St. Chrysostom, "which we love more than God, we make a god of," but that will not please Him, which the only true God of heaven and earth commands. Examine your conscience, dear Christian, and you will admit that St. Chrysostom is right. Miser, who is your God? Mammon, gold and silver, lands and possessions—of these you think day and night; you strive after these things in the sweat of your brow, but still you have never got enough. Unchaste one, who is your God? The sins of the flesh, with which your mind is ever filled. Whom do you serve, you seducer, who by your flattering words seduce the hearts of the innocent and destroy their faith, or make them leave the path of virtue and innocence? "Such men," says the Apostle, "do not serve Christ our Lord, but their own belly" (Rom. xvi. 18). He who serves creatures gives them the preference over the Creator, and he must not complain later when the words of the Apostle are fulfilled. "Idolaters shall not possess the kingdom of God" (I. Cor. vi. 9). Let us, therefore, for the future not follow in the footsteps of the Jews, who wanted a Messiah who would give them every liberty, but let us cleave to our God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and to His only Son Jesus Christ. Let us keep His commandments, however hard or difficult they may be to us. It is not for us to make conditions with our Creator, but we must submit ourselves in all humility to His Divine Will. We only deceive ourselves when we think His commandments are too difficult. God knows what we can accomplish and He does not lay more upon us than we can bear; what is too much for our strength He supplies by His grace. Courage, then; let us serve the Lord with fidelity and zeal all the days of our life, so that we may one day obtain the reward of faithful servants. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord."—Luke iii. 4.

The holy festival of Christmas is close at hand; all flesh shall behold the salvation of God; Christ will be born again in our hearts. It will, therefore, be fitting that we make careful preparations for this feast, and make ourselves worthy to receive Christ. For this reason the Church repeats to us in these days what John the Baptist preached, who was called to announce the coming of the Redeemer to the Jews. He cries out with John, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." We will consider to-day how to do this.

When we are about to celebrate a great festival we clean the house thoroughly, polish the furniture, and make everything neat and tidy, so that the house looks in good order. We even make preparations for ourselves, getting dresses made for the occasion, and so on. All this is good and praiseworthy, my dear Christians; but ought we not to take still greater pains to embellish our inner man, so that soul and body may wear a holiday garment? St. John had no other aim when he called upon the Jews, "to do penance and be converted," and he baptized those who had made the resolution to be better. The careful Martha had certainly cleaned and garnished her house so as to receive the Saviour worthily, and did her utmost to wait upon Him, and still the Saviour reproached her, saying, "Martha, Martha, thou hast been careful of many things; one thing alone is necessary." What would our Saviour say to us when He sees that on great holidays we clean house, get ready suitable clothes, prepare food and drink of the best, and neglect our soul and leave it, like a beggar's child, in dirt and rags, and never once think to clean it so that it may partake of the graces of the feast? What does it avail us, in the words of our Saviour, to gain the whole world and to suffer the loss of our own soul? What good does it do us to clean house, and put on fine clothes, and to eat and drink well, if our soul will one day be damned? Do you wish then, dear Christian, to prepare yourself for the blessed birth of our Lord and Saviour, and to make yourself worthy to entertain Jesus, so as to partake of His graces and blessings? Cleanse and adorn your soul, in the first place.

Without doubt there are many amongst you who have at one

time or another made a pilgrimage to some holy shrine. Now there is a pilgrimage to which I wish to invite you all to-day, and that is a pilgrimage which is not only useful and beneficial, but one which requires little trouble or pains—I mean a pilgrimage into yourself. Such a one was very useful to the prodigal son. He entered into himself and said, "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son" (Luke xv.). And you, too, dear Christians, would find a great benefit if you would enter into yourselves and learn to know your sins, your faults, and your defects. When you know these things then you will be able to purify your hearts and make them worthy for the reception of the Saviour.

You know that we make use of the looking-glass to discover outward defects. There is also a mirror in which we can discover the sins, faults and defects of our soul, and that is the mirror of the ten commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. David had the mirror of the commandments of God before his eyes, when he said: "Then shall I not be confounded when I shall look into all Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 6). David believed that he was only sure of the good pleasure of God when this mirror did not reproach him with any sins or defects. How stands the case with you, dear Christian? Can you look into this mirror without blushing and trembling? Take this looking-glass into your hand during these days which precede the holy feast of the birth of Jesus Christ, and reflect what state your soul is in. Compare your feelings and your aims, your actions and omissions, with the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. In your prayer book you will find a mirror for the preparation of a good confession, made according to the commandments of God and of the Church. Look into it frequently during these days. You retire into your bedroom to look into your mirror and adorn yourself. Go often to church during these days, or into your own room, so as to discover in the mirror of confession your sins and shortcomings; it will help you greatly. But you must not do as that foolish man did, of whom St. James speaks, when he says: "For if a man be a hearer of the word, and

not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass. For he beheld himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was" (James i. 23, 24). How that one is to be pitied who cannot be saved because he hears the word of God but will not obey it; so also those who see the sins and defects of their soul in the mirror of the commandments of God, but they do not become better. If, when we look in the glass, we notice that we have a black spot on our face, we do not go out until we have washed it off. Dear Christian, do the same when you become aware, through looking into the mirror of confession, of the black spots of sin in your soul; do not rest contented until you have washed away all spots, blemishes and impurities by tears of compunction and the reception of the Sacrament of penance. Cleanse and adorn your soul as much as you can. That is what St. John requires when he calls out in to-day's Gospel: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled: and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Courage, then, dear Christians! Follow this advice: purify and adorn your hearts, so that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, may sojourn therein, and pour the plenitude of His grace upon you. Amen.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD.

"Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass."—Luke ii. 15.

To-day we celebrate the glorious feast of the blessed birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Rejoice, then, at the glad tidings which the angel brought to the shepherds who watched their flocks by night, when Christ was born in the stable at Bethlehem; saying to them, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David." I tell you that this glad message is brought to us also, and we have every reason to rejoice at it; for from our Saviour we received forgiveness of sins, grace to do good, and, last of all, eternal life. *Let us go to-day with*

the shepherds to Bethlehem, and see the Son of God made man, and learn from Him what we are to do.

You all know that Christ was born at Bethlehem, an insignificant little town in the land of Judea. As Mary and Joseph could find no shelter, they were obliged to enter a stable to pass the night. There Jesus was born, the Son of God, and a crib was His cradle, hay and straw His bed, the irrational animals His companions.

Dear Christians! Who can understand this? St. Bernard cries out in astonishment: What? Was not Christ, He of whom the psalmist says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein" (Ps. xxiii. 1). Why, then, does He not choose a palace in the principal city of the country, instead of a stable in an unimportant town? Why did He wish to be born of a poor young virgin? Why did He avoid the least comfort? St. Bernard answers that thereby God gave us to understand that we must despise the pomp and glory of the world, that His thoughts and opinions were different from those of the children of this world, who only esteem those happy who are rich and comfortable and thought a great deal of.

Behold, dear Christians, the great Lord of heaven and earth lies like a poor child of man, in a miserable stable, in a crib! Even the poorest child born amongst us has a warm and soft bed. Jesus was contented with a couch of hard straw in a cold stable. Oh, those who are not touched at this must have a heart of stone! And for all that, there are many Christians with such cold hearts that they have not the least pity for the poor Babe in the crib. We say and sing and paint and carve all about this in a very real way; we believe it and admire it; but it goes no further, as a rule. We ought to-day to give our Saviour the most fervent thanks for His inexpressible love; instead of this most people dress better, eat and drink better, come to church, and there the matter ends. That we should return our Saviour love for love, and lead a better life, does not occur to us; and yet this is the principal thing.

And to convince you of this, I ask you, for instance: If Mary and Joseph, with the Infant Jesus, were to come into your midst, seeking for a shelter, would you take them in? Oh, certainly, you reply: there would be a holy rivalry as to who would have the honor of sheltering the Holy Family, and we would give everything that we had to entertain them in a proper manner. But allow me to express

my doubts of your really meaning this, and to prove to you that I have reason to doubt your good will, I will explain to you. Christ does not come Himself in these days asking for shelter or assistance; but He sends, as you know, in His stead, the poor, the needy, and the hungry, the oppressed. And He declares that what we do to the least of these is done to Himself. Now, tell me, how many are going about in these days, poor and miserable, hungry and cold, and not a Christian has pity on them? Alas, we think we have done a great deal when we give a poor man a piece of bread, and we do not trouble ourselves about his other necessities. And how many there are who behave badly to the poor and the oppressed, who send them from the door without kindness or pity, and call them lazy and even worse? But you are doing all this to Christ Himself; for not only the good which we do to our brethren, but also the bad treatment which we give him, will He regard as if done unto Himself. Reflect, further, how ungrateful you are to your Saviour. He became man for love of us, and on the Cross He shed His blood to the last drop for us. What return do most Christians make to Him for this? Alas, they offend Him, and crucify Him over again, by their sins and their vices. Am I not right, then, when I say: The Saviour finds no thanks and no love amongst Christians, for whom He has shown the greatest goodness?

A story is told of an elephant which had become enraged, that, in the midst of his wild run, saw a little child in his path, whom those who had fled before him in their excitement had not been able to take with them. He picked the child up gently with his trunk and placed it in safety on a bench standing near, and then began again his mad course. The irrational animal wanted in this way to show his thanks, for this child had often given him bread or fruit as he passed by.

Dear Christians, let us not be put to shame by an irrational animal! Let us leave off raging against the Christ Child in the crib. He is our greatest Benefactor, our best Friend, and our Hope of Blessedness. Let us, therefore, be grateful to Him by not only providing for the poor and needy this hard winter, but also by keeping His commandments. "He who knows My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me." Yes, we will love Him, that we may be sharers in that peace which the angels announced to-day in the plains of Bethlehem to those who are of good will. Amen.

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

"Brethren, the time is short."—I. Cor. vii. 29.

In a few days, dear Christians, we shall end the year 1900. When we look back at the many days, hours, and minutes of which it was made up, we must admit that no matter how many there were, the time has passed quickly, very quickly, and to-day when we are nearing the end of the year, we can hardly realize that another year of our life has passed away. And if we ask ourselves what we have done during the past year for the salvation of our soul, we shall be obliged to answer: We have done little, very little, indeed, and if God should this day call us to His judgment seat, we should not be able to stand up before it. And yet God has given us the time of our lives, that we should merit heaven. If up to the present we have neglected to do this, we must for the future employ our time better, as we will to-day learn.

After St. Paul had delivered a long address to the Ephesians and taught them how they must renounce all the works of sin and foolishness, how they must love God and their neighbor, and walk in the path of virtue, he concluded by putting together the whole meaning of his teaching briefly in these few words "See, therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time" (Eph. v. 15-16). He wanted to say without doubt: After I have spoken to you concerning the way of salvation, the keeping of the commandments of God, of the love of our neighbor, of patience and humility, of mercy to the poor, and of all the other virtues, it might be difficult for you to remember all this, so I will teach you in a few words what you have to do: "See, therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time." What? you will ask. Have we nothing further to do, to be saved, but to walk circumspectly, and to redeem the time? Who can believe that? Had he said, for instance, like Christ, "Be merciful, that you may expect mercy," or, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole strength, and thy neighbor as thyself," that would be easy to understand; but, that man to be holy and save his soul must redeem the time, that is hard to understand. Is time something that we can buy or recover when we have lost it? St. Gregory answers this question and says: Paul has by these words earnestly exhorted the Ephesians to repentance. He knew well that they had

spent the past years, months, days, and hours in unbelief, superstition, vanity, and voluptuousness, in sin and vice, and to induce them to make good the years and days spent so wickedly, and to make good that time, he advises them to redeem the time. St. Gregory adds that we bring back the hours badly spent and the lost time, when we weep and bewail our sins, return to God by a sincere repentance and by supplying by acts of virtue what we have lost by sin. This is what is meant by redeeming the time. My dear Christians: How many days and hours of the year, which for us is drawing to a close, have we employed sinfully? Years ago it was the custom, in the island of Crete, that each person counted the days of his life and marked them with a little stone, which he dropped either into a vase or some other vessel. If he had passed a pleasant and happy day he threw in a white stone, but if the day had been an unhappy one for him, he threw in a black one. At the end of the year, or at the hour of death, the vase or other vessel would be emptied, the black stones separated from the white, and each heap would be counted. If then the white stones predominated over the black ones the person considered himself fortunate; but if, on the contrary, there were more black ones, he considered himself unhappy and damned. Would to God such a custom was in existence with all Christians, or that at least at the end of the year we would go to the tribunal and give an account of the ill-spent days and hours. Many of us have lived already twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, or perhaps longer. If we had marked our days with black or white stones and to-day had to sort and count them, which heap do you think would be the largest, the black or the white? Ah, I am afraid that many would not find a hundred days in a thousand which they had passed in the practice of virtue, or on which they could call themselves happy. Ask yourselves, dear Christians, what you do each day for the salvation of your soul. If you would bear witness to the truth, you would have to admit that all your efforts and your care was to obtain temporal goods, finery, and adornment, enjoyment and pleasure, and that only too often by striving for these things you had stained your soul with sin and offended your God. Oh, how many black stones you would require every year if you marked the days with them which you passed in sin and vice! As a matter of fact, we have to recover many ill-spent days, we have numerous sins to repent and to make good by proper acts of virtue!

If, my dear Christian, during the course of this year, you have not asked yourself whether you have employed the time which God has lent you to serve Him and to work out your salvation, or whether you have used it in the devil's service and in sin; then let not these few remaining days of this year pass away without taking account and asking yourself: Have you in this year served the world, the flesh, and the devil more than God? Have you been charitable and kind to the poor and the needy, or have you closed your heart to all feelings of sympathy? Have you been envious and spiteful, or have you taken pleasure in your neighbor's good fortune? Have you not lied and cursed, defamed and calumniated, nor ridiculed and scorned? Have you, when you sinned, repented of your sins and done penance for them, or are you living now unrepentant in your sins?

If you must acknowledge that you have spent the time badly, and grievously offended God, then follow now the advice of the Apostle: "See, therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly; not as an animal, but as wise, redeeming the time." Repent of your sins, make your peace with God, blot out the evil committed by works of virtue, and strive above all things, from now on, after the kingdom of God and His justice. If you do this, you have reason to hope that the coming year will be for you a year of salvation and blessing. Amen!

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

"And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus."—Luke ii. 21.

To-day is a day of the greatest importance. To-day we close the octave of the festival of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to-day we are reminded of the painful circumcision of Jesus Christ, by which He shed His blood for us for the first time; to-day we honor the Most Holy Name of Jesus, which the Child received at His circumcision, and we begin, also, to-day a New Year. To-day we call out to one another: "A happy New Year!" and many persons accompany this wish with a present or little gift. I, too, my dear Christians, *wish you all, from*

my heart, a happy New Year, and I will *also make you a present for the New Year.* Listen, and I will tell you what it is!

I.—As far as my New Year's wish is concerned, I wish you first of all a *new year;* that is to say, I wish that, as to-day we begin a New Year according to time, each and every one of you will, from to-day, begin a new year for your moral life; that he may lay aside the old, sinful man and put on a new man, who is made in justice and holiness; I wish that each and every one of you will, from this day, uproot his old, sinful habits more and more, and strive to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. This was St. Paul's (the Apostle's) wish to the Ephesians, when he wrote to them: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth." (Eph. iv. 23). I wish you, further, a peaceful year. By that I mean the peace which the angels announced to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, and to all mankind on the night when Jesus was born, saying: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." I mean the peace which Christ made between God and man, by His Passion and death, of which we partake when we receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, and which we preserve within us by avoiding grievous sin. If to-day your conscience reproaches you with a grievous sin, then you have not this peace, for there is no peace for the wicked. What greater happiness can I wish you than the peace which testifies to a good conscience? My wish, however, cannot bring you this peace; you must make the effort to obtain it for yourselves. Very well, then, seek for peace by receiving the Sacraments worthily, and preserve it by a good and God-fearing life! If, on the evening of every day, your conscience bears witness that you have served God, and have not committed any grievous sins, then you will have peace and happiness, a peace which the world cannot give, and cannot take away; a happiness which surpasses all other joys, which the children of this world seek for in vain in the possession of money and goods, honors and reputation, and in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures.

II.—But I will not let to-day pass with a simple wish only; I will give you a present—indeed, it is an exceedingly costly present I give you; namely, Him who was presented to the world by His Heavenly Father, that He might begin a new time of

bliss. I give you Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Precious Blood which He has shed for the first time at His circumcision to-day, for your sins and mine, and those of the whole world. We can and ought to learn of Him to-day to circumcise ourselves in a spiritual way; for He says: "I have given you an example, so that you may do what I have done. . . . He who will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. . . . And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; and if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish than thy whole body be cast into hell" (Matt. v. 29-30). To circumcise one's self spiritually means, also, to deny and to mortify one's self, and to prevent a sense, or a member of our body, sinning against God and His commandments. Very well, then, dear Christian, if you are in the habit of cursing and swearing, of wishing evil or backbiting, put aside this habit in the New Year, swear and curse no longer, nor tell lies, nor slander, nor calumniate. Whoever has been given to drunkenness, let him now keep sober. Whoever has found his happiness in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures will, from now on, make an agreement with his eyes that they will not look again at improper objects; he will close his ears, that they may not listen to an ungodly tongue; he will close his mouth, that he may not utter any more scandal words. The miser, who, until now, kept a closed hand, and never gave anything to the needy, will now be merciful, and give alms generously. He whose heart has been the abode of impure thoughts and desires will purify it and make it a dwelling-place for God. In this way we shall circumcise our eyes and ears, mouth and lips, heart and hands, and bring an agreeable sacrifice to our Lord and Saviour. To encourage us to do this, the Apostle calls to us: "For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body!" (I. Cor. vi. 20).

Yes, dear Christians, we were bought with a great price, with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and we should be the most ungrateful of men, and deserving of the greatest punishment, if we used our body with its members continually in the service of sin and of the devil. "Glorify and bear God in your body" in such a way that in all your thoughts and senses,

in your actions, you will strive to imitate the Saviour. And if, until now, you have failed to do this, do not put off your repentance and improvement any longer. God has allowed us another year in which to do penance and work for our salvation. We know not whether this will be the last year of our lives. Let us live as if it were our last; let us do penance for our sins; let us strive after virtue; let us practice good works, and so live as we shall wish to have lived at the hour of our death! In this manner, this year will be for each one of us a year of peace and salvation, which I wish you and myself! Amen.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

"And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh."—Matt. ii. 11.

THE Gospel which we have just read contains many wonderful things. The star is wonderful which led the Wise Men from the East to Bethlehem. Wonderful is the unexpected arrival of these men from a far country to see the new-born King and Messiah, to do honor to Him and to worship Him, at a time when the inhabitants of Jerusalem, yes, even the inhabitants of Bethlehem, in whose midst He was born, knew nothing about Him. It is wonderful that, at their arrival, King Herod was seized with fear, and all Jerusalem with him. It is wonderful, also, that the star disappeared when they reached the city of Jerusalem, and that it appeared again and guided them as they went to Bethlehem. Wonderful is the faith and the humility of these men, who were not confused when they found themselves conducted to a stable, wherein they found a poor little Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a crib, but prostrated themselves before the Infant and worshipped Him as true God, and as King, brought Him presents. I will, however, not speak of these wonders, but only *of the gifts* which the Wise Men brought to the Saviour, *and of those which we should give Him.*

St. Matthew says: "They (the Wise Men) opened their treasures and offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh." They offered Him gold to acknowledge His kingly dignity, frank-

incense to honor His divinity, myrrh, which is an emblem of human frailty, to bear witness to His human nature. These Wise Men were the first to offer their homage and adoration to the new-born Saviour, and they are kneeling there in the stable at Bethlehem, in the name of our heathen ancestors, to greet Him as our Saviour and Redeemer. Therefore, it is befitting that we, who have been enlightened by the Star of the true faith, from which we receive grace for grace, out of the fulness of the merits of Jesus Christ, that we show our gratitude for the gift of faith by entering in the footsteps of the Wise Men, and bringing gifts, also, to the Saviour; for it is said: "No one shall appear with his hands empty before the Lord; but every one shall offer according to what he hath, according to the blessing of the Lord his God, which he shall give him" (Deut. xvi., 16-17). What, then, shall we offer Him? We cannot offer Him gold, frankincense and myrrh, and if we have nothing to offer Him that is a sign, as St. Gregory says, that we love Him very little, or not at all. What, then, shall we do? I reply briefly: "Our Lord and Saviour no longer requires earthly goods, as at the time when the Wise Men brought Him gold, frankincense and myrrh; He is not lying, poor, miserable and weeping, in the stable at Bethlehem, but He is sitting, surrounded with glory and majesty, at the right hand of His Father in Heaven. Therefore, "He has no need of our goods" (Ps. xv. 2); but very many of His own upon earth suffer great want, and whatever we do with a kind heart for them we have, He assures us, done to Him. "Whatever you have done unto these the least of my brethren, you have done unto Me."

In the poor and needy, Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer, is Himself poor and needy, and when we help the poor, we help Jesus Himself; when we give alms to a person in want, we give it to Jesus Himself; when we provide a warm room for one shivering with cold and sickness, we do it for Jesus Himself; in a word, whatever kindness we show to a poor fellow creature, we show it to our Saviour Himself. If He, our Redeemer and Saviour, who died a shameful death to obtain everlasting life for us, came round in His own Person and held out His hand for an alms, and asked us for an offering, should we refuse Him? No; to show our gratitude for all that He has done and suffered for love of us, and for our salvation, we should do all that lay in our power. He does not go around Himself to receive His thanks, but He sends the poor,

the needy and the miserable, and declares that whatever good we do to them, we have done it to Himself. In this respect St. Chrysostom says: "The hand of the poor is Abraham's bosom; what it receives is deposited there. The hand of the needy is the alms box of heaven; everything received remains there, shut up, so that it may not be lost upon earth. The hand of those in want is the treasure room of Christ; what they receive is preserved by Christ."

Well now, my dear Christians, let us not for the future drive away the poor and the miserable from our door with coldness, and unfeelingly! They are the children of God and the brothers of Jesus Christ; they are those whom He has chosen to receive the sacrifice and the gifts which we should offer to God, the Almighty King, from our money and possessions. Let us give unto them according to our circumstances; if we have much, let us give much; if we have little, let us give a little with a kind heart. Even the widow's mite is an acceptable offering to the Lord, and will receive a rich reward. For the Spirit of the Lord promises us: "He who gives to the poor lends to God with interest, and He will repay a hundredfold. . . . Almsgiving blots out sins, rescues us from eternal death and obtains for us the mercy of God." He who has promised that a cup of cold water given in His name to a thirsty man will not go unrewarded will repay you a hundredfold for all the good that you show to the poor and needy. Be merciful, therefore, that you may obtain mercy. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

"He was subject to them."—Luke ii. 51.

THE Gospel of to-day is so rich in teachings for us that the few moments which we have for its consideration are not sufficient to enable us to treat of them all. Which lesson, then, shall I select? Shall I hold up to you as a model for your imitation how Christ, even in His tender years, travelled the long distance to Jerusalem and willingly stayed there awhile? Or shall I speak of His love for prayer and for the Word of God? Or shall I describe to you the care and anxiety of the parents, who

sought Him sorrowfully for three long days? No, assuming the words of the Gospel, "He was subject to them," I will speak to you *of the obedience of children toward their parents.*

Amongst the theologians the question has been asked, What gave the angels and the heavenly spirits the greatest joy, next to the Beatific Vision? and there are several different views on this subject. The answer of the theologian Lactantius pleases me the most. He says: "The greatest happiness and joy of the heavenly spirits consists in this, that they are obedient to the Lord their God in all things. If this privilege were not allowed them, there would be no bliss for them in Heaven." From this St. Ephraim draws this awful conclusion for disobedient children—he says: "A son or a daughter is just as much obliged to obey his or her parents as the heavenly spirits are obliged to obey the Lord God, and as an angel who would not obey God was considered unworthy of Heaven, so, likewise, a disobedient son, or a disobedient daughter, is not worthy to be called child, and merits eternal perdition." How completely it is the will of God that children should obey their parents is shown by the position which He has given to the commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother." We know by Holy Scripture that God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses written on tables of stone. On the first table were written the first three Commandments, which tell us how we are to behave toward God, and on the second were inscribed the seven remaining Commandments, which tell us how we are to act toward our neighbor. Amongst these we find the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother" at the head, and God undoubtedly wishes to point out to us by this of what great importance this Commandment is, and how much He desires that all children should keep it. For this reason, then, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came, not to abolish this law, but to fulfill it, and thereby to give us an example for our imitation, kept this Commandment conscientiously during His whole life. He, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, was subject to His earthly parents; He obeyed those whom, as God, He had to command. Even when He was hanging upon the cross, and suffering the most excruciating agony, He did not forget His mother, who stood at the foot of the cross and wept. He commended the care of her to His beloved disciple John.

You children, who depreciate your parents, who dishonor and ridicule them, who, by your disobedience, your insolence, your insubordination, cause them untold pain and trouble, look at the example which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gives you, who was subject to His parents; as He grew in years, so did He in wisdom, and He was pleasing to God and to men! Do you never think of the pains which your mother bore to give you birth? Do you never think of the touching care, the untiring patience and the self-sacrificing love with which she has nourished you from the moment of your birth, watched over and taken care of you until you were grown up? Do you not think any more of the hard work, of the sweat and care which your father has undergone, so that you should not want the necessaries of life, and for your education and bringing up? Do you no longer remember the trouble and anxiety which your parents have so often put up with on your account? Do you not know that your parents still love you with all their hearts, and only strive for and wish you the greatest possible good, in spite of which you so often requite their love with ingratitude and disdain? Take to heart the awful words of Holy Writ: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth the labor of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out and the young eagles eat it" (Prov. xxx. 17). "Cursed be he that honoreth not his father and mother; and all the people shall say, Amen" (Deut. xxvii. 16). "Remember thy father and thy mother, lest God forget thee in their sight and thou shouldst wish that thou hadst not been born, and curse the day of thy nativity" (Ecclus. xxiii. 18-19). Take warning from the chastisement which, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, befell disobedient children. Absalom, for instance, rose up against his father and gathered a large army together to make war upon him. After taking the city of Jerusalem, he persecuted his father, whom he had put to flight. His father, however, opposed him with a small, but faithful, army. The battle began, Absalom was defeated, and was forced to flee. He was caught by his hair in a tree, and remained hanging there until he was transpierced by a lance. I could recount many more such examples, to prove to you that a just God punishes the disobedience of children to their parents, now in one way, now in another.

But take this well to heart, Christian people! Love and honor your parents, and be subject to them! Try as much as lies in your power to requite the untold benefits which you have received from them all your life. Holy Scripture relates of Samson that, having found in the jaws of a lion which he had slain a few days previously a swarm of bees and a honeycomb, he took the latter and offered this sweet booty to his parents for their benefit. Imitate Samson, dear Christians; put before your parents the sweet honey, and not the bitter gall. Do not afflict them by your insolence and disobedience, but give them pleasure by your good, Christian behavior. Take care of them in time of want and sickness, look after them in their old age, and give them a proof of that same love which they have always shown to you. If you do this, you may hope that the Lord will bless you abundantly, according to His promise to good and obedient children. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

"And Jesus also was invited, and His Disciples, to the marriage."—I. John ii. 2.

At this time the wedding festivities begin again, which are forbidden during the closed time, and it is not without a motive that the Church has the Gospel read to us to-day of the marriage at Cana, at which Jesus was present with His mother and His Disciples, and where He worked His first miracle by changing the water into wine.

The Church wishes to give prospective bridal couples an example of how they should conduct their weddings, and whom they should invite to them. It matters not if the bride and bridegroom have no wine to set before their guests, or that the wine should give out; the *principal thing upon which the happiness of their whole life depends is, that they should take care that the spiritual wine, I mean the grace of God, is not wanting to them.* We will consider this subject further to-day.

As long as the world exists, there has never been such a wedding celebrated as that of to-day in Cana of Galilee; there were present Jesus, the Son of God, and King of Heaven and Earth; Mary, His Virgin Mother, and His Disciples. But still at the wedding was heard the complaint, "They have no more wine." How did this happen? The bride and groom were, perhaps, poor people, or, perhaps they had not expected so many guests. Be that as it may, they were, at any rate, good, honest, God-fearing people, otherwise Jesus would not have come, with His Mother and His Disciples, and have worked there His first miracle. They were certainly not without spiritual wine, the grace of God; for the Author and Dispenser of all graces sat in their midst and blessed not only the water, which He changed into wine, but He certainly blessed them, that they might have happiness and peace in their married state. In these days, dear Christians, a great many weddings are celebrated at which both kinds of wine are wanting; and, again, there are many other weddings at which wine to drink is to be found in plenty, but the grace of God is wanting, which alone is the foundation and support of a happy married life. Many enter into the state of matrimony and are happy and joyous at the wedding, but joy and happiness do not last long; the wine of rejoicing is changed into the water of tribulation. It happens to them as to an inexperienced gardener, who sowed and planted between sand and stone; and, therefore, they can say, with the prophet Isaias (v.): "I had a vineyard, and I planted it with the choicest vines, and I looked that I should bring forth grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes." This is what a great many married people can say: "We hoped in the married state to find the sweet wine of love and happiness, but we find only the sour grapes of troubles and weariness." And why is this? I could give you many reasons, but will content myself simply by saying, *the principal reason why there are so many unhappy marriages lies in the fact that the young men and young women, in making their choice, do not consult the will of God and His laws.*

He who wishes to be happy in a certain state must have a vocation for the same. Whether he has a vocation for it or not, he cannot find out by merely consulting his relatives, but he must beseech the Lord to give him the right intention and to direct

him in making his choice, and he must also ask his parents for their advice. For this reason the wise Solomon says: "House and riches are given by parents: but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord" (Prov. xix. 14). However, nobody will believe this in our days. Instead of asking advice of God, one only considers his passions and temporal interests. Man does not bother himself any more about the law of God, but, instead, is only interested as to whether the person he is about to marry has money or is beautiful. This is why so few married couples feel really happy in their state.

What is to be expected from a union which is only contracted out of sensual love is well expressed in the words of the wise King Solomon, who says: "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. xxxi. 30). That means, virtue and the fear of God adorn the wife, as well as the husband, as an ornament and a praise, and are the foundation of happiness in the married state; beauty and personal grace fade away, like the flowers of the field, and cannot, therefore, afford married people lasting happiness. He who is guided in the choice of a wife by appearances and sensual desires alone, and not guided by reason, will find himself bitterly disappointed, for in the same measure as bodily perfections change and fade away the mutual love will grow cold, and at last be turned into indifference. And then there come quarrels, sufferings and troubles, and happiness and peace are soon at an end. Therefore, the angel Raphael said to young Tobias: "For they who in such manner receive matrimony as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power" (Tobias vi. 17); these will find no happiness and no blessing in their marriage, but only troubles and suffering. Even the pagans knew well that marriages contracted only out of sensual love proved unhappy ones. Olympia, the mother of King Alexander, had a servant maid who was remarkable for her beautiful figure, but was impertinent and wanton. When some one asked for the hand of the beautiful young girl, Olympia made answer: "O unfortunate man, you are marrying with your eyes, and not with your reason." The same thing can be said to-day of those who marry only

from motives of sensual love, and they can be told in advance that they will not find that happiness which they seek in the married state. Still less happiness is there for those who marry for money, and who do not take into consideration whether they are congenial to one another, or whether, by their virtues and fear of God, they can make each other happy. Because they do not consult with God, the words of the prophet are fulfilled in them: "You have looked for more, and, behold, it became less; and you brought it home, and I blowed it away" (Agg. i. 9).

If, then, you are thinking of entering the married state, young men and young women, do not go for advice to human beings alone, but consult God and your parents. Take no account of exterior attractions, beauty or wealth, but seek out a good and virtuous heart, upright and God-fearing! Above all things, be careful to enter the married state with a pure and chaste heart! Then you can invite Jesus to the wedding, and He will come and make you a participant of His blessing. And to you, who have chosen unwisely, and now in your union have nothing but worry and vexation, suffering and tribulations, the best thing I can say to you is, carry your cross patiently, and beseech God daily, that He may grant you his grace, so that your courage may not fail. You may, then, hope to merit heaven in the married state, for "blessed are they that mourn," our Saviour assures us, "for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 5). Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

"And behold, a leper came and adored him, saying: Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."—Matt. viii. 2.

A LEARNED man in the olden times used to say: That the soul had its season, and that the body also had its season. And the leper in to-day's Gospel knew this; for after having first worshipped the Saviour, as the Son of God, a duty which regarded his soul, he then thought of his sickly, miserable body and said: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." This is right; the soul

has preference over the body, and must be attended to first, before we think of the necessities of the body. This affords me an opportunity to-day, *of speaking of the preference which we must give to our soul, rather than to our body.*

The wise Solomon says: "By three things the earth is disturbed: and the fourth it cannot bear: By a slave when he reigneth (for such a one is overbearing, he oppresses the people and is cruel for fear of losing the sovereignty); by a fool when he is filled with meat (for then he becomes overbearing and behaves badly to others); by an odious woman when she is married (for she causes quarrels and discord), and by a bond woman when she is heir to her mistress" (Prov. xxx. 21-23). The last one, according to Solomon, is unbearable, for the servant become a mistress is overbearing, and treats her dependents with contempt and cruelty. St. Augustine understands by the servant, the body, and by the mistress, the soul. To it God has confided the dominion over the body, and the body must be the servant of the soul; for it is said: "But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. iv. 7). And this is quite right; for the soul has been created to the image and likeness of God, and is immortal; it has been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and it has been sanctified by the Holy Ghost and intended for Heaven, while the body was formed from the slime of the earth, and will return again to earth from whence it came. On this account the soul is superior to, and has dominion over, the body and its desires, and the relation is an unnatural one and unbearable, if the body takes preference over the soul, if the servant steps into her mistress' place and uses her authority. How is it in your case? Do you give the preference in all things to the soul, and is your salvation your first and principal care? Or does your body take the first place and have dominion over your soul in such a way that all your thoughts and actions tend to satisfy all, even the most shameful desires of the body?

When the Cardinal Hosius was told that the king made his life forfeit for his courageous defence of the Catholic faith, he said: "He who takes my present life, takes no more than my valet does, when he undresses me at night." Do you value your life as lightly, dear Christian, and do you use every precaution for the salvation of your soul? Tell me, you avaricious, miserly man, who day after day labor in the sweat of your brow, to increase your money

and possessions, who thereby cheat your neighbor, offend God, and who never come to the assistance of your poor and needy fellow-men—tell me, which do you prize the highest, your body, or your soul? Which has dominion, the mistress or the servant, the soul or the body? O lamentable blindness of men! God created the soul to be the mistress of the body, and man makes it the servant of the body, a miserable slave of money. Tell me, you unchaste man, which do you prize the highest, the body or the soul? Ah, your soul is in reality the poor slave of your flesh! God has given your soul a memory that you might think of His goodness, an understanding to recognize His greatness and majesty, and a will to love Him, and you use your memory, your understanding and your will to procure all the sensual pleasures for your body which it demands! O Christian soul! Thou who art adorned with the likeness of God, thou who art redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, ought you not to be ashamed to be a slave to the animal passions of your flesh? Tell me, dear Christian, what you would think if you saw a prince dressed in rags, sitting upon a magnificent steed, with the most costly harness? Would you not think that the prince had lost his reason? The wise Solomon says: "I have seen slaves upon horses and princes walking on the ground as servants" (Eccles. x. 7). Would you not be surprised, dear Christian, to see a prince walking behind the horse as a footman to his former slave? You are guilty of just such foolishness, when you beautify and adorn your body as man does his horse which should be subject to the soul, whilst you let your soul go about in rags and covered with the dirt of sin. It is foolishness for you to make your soul the slave of your body, when it should belong to the kingdom of Christ, and is intended by God to be served by the body! But you do this, my dear Christians, as often as you commit grievous sin. Such foolishness ought to make you blush with shame! It is related of Semiramide, who from being a slave was made a queen, that when King Ninus, who was blinded by passionate love, told her to ask for whatever she wanted and it would be granted to her, she asked to reign over the kingdom for one day. When this privilege was granted to her she had the king put to death and made herself queen of the realm. This is what will happen to you, dear Christian, if you favor your body and give it dominion over your soul; at last your body will bring your soul to everlasting death and damnation. Dear Christians!

Put an end to this unnatural state of things, which even the pagans considered a disgrace to man! Even in those days the wise Seneca prayed to the gods: "That they might grant him the grace to be interiorly beautiful!" He prized his body very little, and desired only that his immortal soul should be beautiful and pleasing to the gods. This is the principal thing, for "what does it profit a man," says the Saviour, "if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his own soul?" Of what use is it for us to be rich and have many earthly possessions, and honors, if we allow our bodies all possible pleasures, and thereby neglect the salvation of our soul, and are finally lost for all eternity? Let us for the future, never again, give our body preference over our soul, by principally, and in the first place caring for all the desires of our body and neglecting our soul! Let us for the future expend as much care upon our soul as we have formerly done for our body? Let us wash it and purify it as soon as it is stained with sin by tears of contrition and penance! Let us adorn it every day with Christian virtues! Let us strive to make it always richer in good works and merits for the kingdom of Heaven. And then we can give that preference to the soul which it should have, according to the will of God, and we may then hope the Lord will one day accept it into His Heavenly Kingdom. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"—Matt. xx. 6.

THE parable in to-day's gospel of the master of the house going out at different times of the day to find laborers for his vineyard, and promising them for this work a certain amount of wages, can be explained in many ways. I hold with those who understand by the head of the house, the Lord God; by the vineyard, the Church of Christ; by the laborers, mankind; and by the wages, life everlasting. If we, my dear Christians, who are already called, desire to carry off the reward of eternal life, we must not fold our hands idly in our lap, but we *must labor, and endeavor to become rich in all good works,* as we shall learn to-day more particularly.

When the ancient Romans sent their sons to war, they gave them a shield on which no coat of arms had yet been placed. In this way

they wished to encourage them to merit by their bravery a coat of arms of which they could be proud. Our life on earth is nothing but an incessant struggle and warfare, and our shield in the fight must be our faith, according to the words of the Apostle: "In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one" (Eph. vi. 16). If we are good soldiers, and wish to do honor to Christ who is our leader and commander, we must fight valiantly, and perform actions which will give a proof of our courage, our bravery, and fidelity. I mean that we must practise good works, for faith without good works is void, it is dead, as St. James says: "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? Faith without works is dead. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (James ii. 14).

For this reason all the saints of God were assiduous in becoming rich in good works; they fought, and struggled, and performed heroic actions, which gave them their distinctive coats-of-arms, as it were, and tended to their eternal glory. St. Stephen, for instance, is represented with stones upon his shield, because he was stoned to death for the faith of Jesus, St. Peter and his brother Andrew bear a cross, St. Paul a sword, St. Lawrence a gridiron, St. Sebastian an arrow, and other saints the instruments of their combat and victory. And if we desire to imitate them and obtain heaven, we must not let our hands lie idly in our lap, but we must work, fight, and struggle as much as we can. It is not without a purpose that Christ, our model and example, ascended into heaven with outstretched arms. He has thereby, as St. Bernard says, pointed out to us the way to heaven, and shown us that, if we wish to reach there, we must move our hands and work. For this reason He said to His apostles, who after His ascension stood gazing up to heaven: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven?" (Acts i. 11). Why do you stand here idle, gazing into heaven? Go to Jerusalem, and do that which you have been commanded to do! For this reason, also, St. Paul exhorts his beloved Timothy: "Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (II. Tim. ii. 3). Fight the good fight, and strive to become rich in good works.

No, dear Christians, in order to be saved it is not enough to have the true faith. We must practise good works, as our faith prescribes.

"For in Christ Jesus," says the apostle, "faith only availeth which worketh by charity" (Gal. v. 6). And he bears this out further in writing to the Corinthians: "And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I. Cor. xiii. 2, 3). Therefore, the Saviour said to the youth who asked Him what he should do to obtain eternal life: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17). We prove our love by keeping the commandments of God; for, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them: he it is that loveth me" (John xiv. 21).

You see, then, dear Christians, what God requires of us. It is not sufficient that we are called to the faith, and are members of the one true Church of Christ. It is not enough that we have in this Church all the means of salvation. We must also, enlightened, strengthened, and fortified by these means, fight and combat against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and strive to become rich in good works by keeping the commandments of God and serving the Lord faithfully.

Our Saviour has explained this to us in a beautiful way by the parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins. The five wise ones were admitted to the nuptials, but the five foolish ones were sent back. They cried out indeed, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" but they received the answer, "I know you not." And why was this? Because they had neglected to fill their lamps with oil. And so will it be with all those who have had the light of faith, but have neglected to keep it burning with the oil of good works: they will be shut out of heaven.

Dear Christians, how would it be with you, if to-day the bridegroom were to come? Would you be admitted to the heavenly nuptials? Alas! I fear it would happen to you as it did to the five foolish virgins. For who among you strives day by day to keep the commandments of God and to become rich in good works? We have the opportunity to do good every day, but we let it pass by without making any use of it, and instead we do evil. Am I not right? Whosoever is without sin, let him step forward, and we will praise him! But, alas! we have all sinned, and are deficient in glory before the Lord, and perhaps none of us would pass and be

admitted to the heavenly marriage feast, if the Lord should call us to-day to judgment.

My dear Christians, if we wish to be of the number of those laborers who one day will receive their reward, we must from this moment not let our hands lie idly in our laps. Therefore, I say to you: "Why do you stand here all the day idle?" Up to this you have done nothing for your eternal salvation. Do not neglect this any longer, for you know not the day nor the hour when the Lord will come, to distribute reward or punishment. Labor, therefore, as much as you possibly can to become rich in virtues and merits, so as to enter one day into the kingdom of God. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

"The seed is the word of God."—Luke viii. 11.

In to-day's gospel, our Saviour compares the word of God to the seed which the farmer sows in his field, and He wishes us to understand thereby, that as good seed is necessary for the field that it may bring forth good fruit, so also is the word of God necessary for our souls, that man may bring forth fruit for eternal life. The greater part of the seed which the sower planted was lost. *So it is with the seed of the divine word: it is sowed plentifully, but it bears little fruit. Wherein lies the fault? Not in the seed; nor in the sower; but principally in the soil, as we shall learn to-day.*

In the early days of Christianity, before there were any churches, and the Christians assembled for divine worship in hidden places and caves, the zeal of the faithful, as the history of those times tells us, in listening to the word of God, was very great, and they took the greatest care to put it into practice. The same praise can be given in our days to the newly converted Christians in Asia, Africa, America, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean, who on Sundays and holydays often have to travel miles to hear the word of God. But of Christians in general this cannot be said. They have opportunities to hear the word of God every Sunday and holyday, but by many of them it is not appreciated. They would a great deal rather that there was no sermon; and, when they do listen to a sermon, they pay very little attention, only wishing that it would

soon be over. No matter how earnestly or impressively the preacher speaks, they are not touched. Even when he places their sins and vices clearly and plainly before their eyes, and depicts in the most vivid colors the punishments which they deserve; when he represents to them that they might suddenly be called by death to the judgment-seat of God, and there, perhaps, be condemned to hell—they pay no attention, and the word of God remains without fruit, because the ground is worthless upon which it falls. Such people have no desire for heaven: the world and its pleasures has taken possession of their hearts in such a manner that they cannot tear themselves away from it.

Sometimes when a far traveled man relates of the countries he has seen, and of the adventures and hardships which he experienced in his travels, only few of his hearers will be interested. But, if it should so happen that one of the company intends to undertake this same journey, then this one will be all attention, make minute inquiries as to the route which he must take, and of every circumstance which it may be useful for him to know. We all of us, my dear Christians, are making the journey to our true country; we are on the road to heaven, and we preachers speak of this eternal home from the pulpit. We show the way which leads thereto, describe the dangers which you shall encounter on the way; we give you the means to overcome them, and we encourage you to proceed courageously in the right path. Those among our listeners whose whole heart is taken up with the world and its pleasures, honors, and goods have certainly no desire for heaven, pay no attention to what we say, and continue as before in the path of sin and vice; but he who longs for heaven is anxious to learn all those things which will be useful to him on his way there, that he may not miss it, and be sure of reaching his goal, and he writes, as it were, every word upon the tablet of his heart, so that he may not forget, and act according to our instructions. There are still others who listen attentively to the sermon, take it to heart, and make good resolutions for the future; but, at the same time, their emotion does not last long, and they soon forget their good resolutions.

Upon one occasion, when Saul had set forth with his followers to look for David and to kill him, he entered into the same cave to rest himself in which David and his followers lay hidden. David could have slain Saul; but he did not do so. As a proof that Saul had been in his power, he cut off a piece of Saul's cloak while he slept,

and followed him when he left the cave. When he had overtaken him, he besought him to desist from persecuting him and from attempting his life. He showed him the piece of his cloak, as a proof that he could have killed him if he had desired to do so. Saul was touched, and promised and took an oath that for the future he would consider David as his friend. However, Saul's hatred of David was again awakened, and he never ceased to persecute him until he died.

And this happens also to some people who now listen to the word of God. During the sermon, when the goodness and mercy of God, and the love of Jesus Christ, the horror of sin, the punishments of hell, and kindred subjects are spoken of, they are moved to tears, and say with heart and voice: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! I repent of my sins with all my heart. I will confess them, and do better! The devil shall never again have me in his power; I will serve God all the days of my life!" In this way and many others they give expression to the emotion of their heart, and one would imagine that now they would become really virtuous people. But far from it! Hardly have they left the church, or returned to their ordinary occupations, and they have already forgotten what they promised in the house of God. The first temptation breaks down all their good resolutions, and they do just the same as they did before. How true this is, you probably know as well as I do.

You see, my dear Christians, this is why the word of God remains without fruit, because the soil upon which it falls is not good; because the heart is occupied by the goods, honors, and pleasures of this world, so that it can not tear itself away from them. Oh! remember, then, that only those will be saved who hear the word of God and obey it. Therefore, begin to-day to lay up the word of God in your hearts, and observe it better every day, so that you may be ever free from every sin, and richer in virtues and good works, which will open the gate of heaven to you. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

"Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man."—Luke xviii. 31.

The Church in to-day's gospel narrates to us an incident which is calculated to awaken in our hearts feelings of sadness and profound sorrow. I mean the passing of Jesus to His passion and death. And she intends thereby to restrain her children from the sinful pleasures which are indulged in in many parts of the world under the name of *Carnival.* She puts before our eyes Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who clothed Himself with our flesh that He might suffer and die for our sins. She shows us His divine countenance covered with blood and wounds. She shows Him unto us arrayed in the white garment of ridicule, and dragged from the palace of Herod to the court of justice of Pilate, laughed at and mocked by everybody; how he was unmercifully scourged, clad in a purple mantle, crowned with thorns, and a reed placed in His hands for a scepter, and how the soldiers mocked Him, spat upon Him, beat and bruised Him. She shows us how, at last, He is laden with a heavy cross, under which He staggers on the way to Calvary, there to be nailed to the cross in the most terrible agony, and to die while His enemies scoff at Him. When the Saviour Himself, shortly before the fulfilment of all these fearful incidents, said these words to His apostles, "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For he shall be delivered to the gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. And after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again"—I say, when the Saviour spoke these words to His apostles, He wished them to understand that they must not be deceived by the demonstrations of glory which were prepared for His last entry into Jerusalem, and the clamor of the populace manifested on that occasion; but they must remember that He was going to suffer and to die for the sins of the world. The Church also wishes us, in these days when the world revels, to remember Him who, from love for us, shed His blood, and gave His life for us, and that we should show our gratitude by avoiding every sin and sinful pleasure for the love of Him. But, however seriously or impressively it is held up and explained to

Christians, that they crucify the Son of God anew by their sins, and mock at Him (Heb. vi. 6), very few of them take these words to heart and act accordingly. The gospel of to-day tells us that the apostles did not understand the Saviour when He spoke of His passion and death, and of His resurrection from the dead: "And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said." And so it is with many lukewarm Christians. They hear what is preached of the love of Jesus, of His bitter passion and death, and of the divine work of their redemption; but their hearts remain cold. They hear in the pulpit and in the confessional that every mortal sin committed crucifies Christ anew, and merits the chastisement of hell; but they do not understand or take it to heart. Indeed, many so-called Christians hardly believe what they are taught by Holy Scripture, of the severe judgments of God, of the punishment of sin, of hell and eternity, and all living faith has been smothered in their hearts, while they crucify anew, by their sins and vices, Jesus, their Redeemer and Saviour, their best Friend, and greatest Benefactor. What else do you do, dear Christians, but every day of your lives, by your sensuality, intemperance, envy or calumny, or any other sins of which you may be guilty, you who remain impenitent in your sins?

After Joseph was thrown into the well, his brothers sat together, ate, drank, made merry, and had a good time. Not one of them thought of the suffering and tribulation of poor Joseph. Sinners are even more cruel toward Jesus, their brother in the flesh. They give free rein to their sensual pleasures, and not only forget His passion and sufferings and bitter death, which He endured for love of them, but they prepare for Him daily by their sins fresh suffering, mockery, and insult. Tell me, is it possible to imagine a more heartless ingratitude or greater cruelty?

Upon one occasion, when St. Francis of Assisi, who was inflamed with love for his crucified Saviour, was passing a cemetery and saw the image of the crucifixion, he began to cry. When he was asked why he was so sad, he answered: "Why should I not weep? The Son of God was crucified for mankind, and yet He is hated by them and persecuted. He loved them unto death, even unto the ignominious death of the cross, and for all that He must daily suffer still greater ignominy and injustice at their hands. Ah! they crucify Him anew daily by their sins, they despise His exceeding great love. Ought I not to be sorrowful at this, and to weep?"

My dear Christians, do we belong to those ungrateful and cruel men over whom St. Francis of Assisi wept? And if we have belonged to them, we will not do so for the future. If the children of the world crucify Jesus Christ anew by their sins and improprieties, we will not be of their number; but with St. Francis we will weep over them and pray for their conversion. We will in the future, especially when we are tempted to pride, hatred, revenge, envy, sensuality, intemperance, calumny, or any other sin, think of the unutterably painful and bitter death which the Son of God suffered for us, to deliver us from sin and its consequences. By this means we may be victorious over all temptations, and steadfast in our love of Him who loved us unto death, for "it is certain," says the theologian Origenes, "that sin cannot flourish where the bitter death of Christ is considered: the whole army of sins will be put to flight." Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil."—Matt. iv. 1.

After the Saviour had been baptized by John, He went into the desert, to prepare Himself there, in quiet retirement from the world, by prayer and fasting, for His coming ordeal. Having fasted there for forty days and forty nights, He was approached by the devil, who tempted Him, and He permitted it, on the one hand, to show us by His example how we may and can resist temptations, and, on the other hand, to merit the necessary graces for us, to conquer our temptations. The time is too short for me to explain all this fully to you, and I will restrict myself to showing you, according to the instruction of the gospel, (1) *when we are most frequently tempted, and* (2) *what means we must principally make use of to overcome our temptations.*

1. It is remarkable that Christ was not tempted by the devil, until after having fasted and prayed forty days and nights in the solitude of the desert. And so it is in our days. The devil has not the most violent temptations for the wicked and impious men, but for the pious and just. The former are wicked of themselves, and do not require the attention of the devil; but the just people have

the good intention of avoiding sin and of practising virtue, and it takes all the devil's cunning and power to shake their good resolutions and to cause them to fall. He then, according to St. Chrysostom, does as the pirates do. When they see a wreck floating upon the waves, they do not trouble themselves to gain possession of it, because they know that there is little or no booty in it; but, when they perceive a heavily freighted vessel, they do everything in their power, even jeopardizing life and limb, to get possession of it. In this way does the devil, that hellish pirate, take no notice of sin-laden souls; he aims only at those whose soul is laden and adorned with numerous beautiful virtues, and he strives with all his might to get them in his power. This is the devil's mode of proceeding. He leaves man alone, and does not cause him any particular temptation so long as man is wicked, and tempts others to sin by bad discourses or wicked examples, thereby helping him; but as soon as they shake off his yoke, confess their sins sincerely, and seriously think of reforming, and beginning earnestly to seek after virtue, and the freedom of the children of God, the devil falls into a passion, and leaves no stone unturned to make the accomplishment of such resolutions futile. For this reason the wise Sirach says: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Ecclus. ii. 1). And St. Paul writes: "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II. Tim. iii. 12).

If you take this into consideration, you troubled and timid souls, you will convince yourselves that you have no cause to be troubled and to complain that you are molested by many violent temptations. On the contrary, you have cause to rejoice; for there is no temptation which is not permitted by God, and there is no act of God which is not a proof of His love, and that He desires and seeks your salvation. Only those who are not tempted have reason to weep and be sorrowful; because it is as a rule a proof that they are so accustomed to sin that they no longer combat the devil, but obey him; that they think no more of penance and conversion, but live hardened in sin. Therefore St. James writes: "My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations" (James i. 2); and consider the one blessed who, by many temptations and vexations, has an opportunity to prove his fidelity to God, to exercise his virtue, and to accumulate merits for the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed is the man," he says, "that endureth temptation:

for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him" (James i. 12).

Now, what are we to do, and how shall we behave so as to resist the various temptations and to gain the victory over them? I could mention to you many means, in answer to this question, with which you ought to be already acquainted, but I will restrict myself to pointing out to you the means which our Saviour made use of in to-day's gospel.

2. When the Saviour was tempted thrice by the devil, he used no other weapons to repel his attacks but the word of God; and He teaches us thereby that we, too, should be armed with the word of God, so that we may reject the propositions of the tempter, and obtain victory over him.

When, therefore, in the future, you are tempted in any way to do wrong, when the wicked fiend tries to lead you from the path of truth and virtue, then follow the Saviour's example, and meet these temptations with the word of God. He did not give way to the devil an inch: let us not do so, either. We must sometimes give in to men for the love of peace; but to the tempter who wishes to lead us into sin, we must not give in in the least. We must advance toward him always with great determination, and say: "I will not do it. Be gone, Satan: for it is written, 'The Lord thy God shalt thou worship, and him only shalt thou serve.'" If, for instance, the devil persuades you to put off your repentance from day to day, or to give it up altogether, then remember the words of Scripture: "Watch ye therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come" (Matt. xxiv. 42). If the wicked fiend counsels you to neglect a good work because it is not necessary for salvation, then say: "It is written, 'And in doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing'" (Gal. vi. 9). If you are tempted to impurity, to intemperance, to avarice, to calumny, then remember the words of Holy Scripture: "Neither adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, shall possess the kingdom of God" (I. Cor. vi. 9-10). If the evil one tries to hinder you from praying, then think of the words of Holy Scripture: "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

In one word, no matter what the temptation may be, think always of the divine will, and do not swerve from it a hair's breadth. We pray daily: "Lord, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Let us, then, resolve not to think, desire, speak, or do anything in

opposition to this divine will. Then all the efforts of the wicked one to bring about our downfall will be futile, he will be obliged to let us alone, and an angel of God will help us as he did the Saviour; for it says: "The angel of the Lord shall encamp around about them that fear him; and shall deliver them" (Ps. xxxiii. 8). Let us walk only according to the word and will of God, and never depart from it, and we need fear no assaults. The Lord will be ever near us with His succor, and the words of the apostle will be fulfilled: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him" (James i. 12). Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

"And He was transfigured before them."—Matt. xvii. 2.

It is not surprising that the Apostle Peter was so ravished by the spectacle presented to his gaze upon Mount Thabor, that he exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias;" because he was beholding his Master wonderfully transfigured; "his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow, and behold, there appeared to them Moses, and Elias talking with him." Now, if a single ray of the glory of Jesus Christ so delighted St. Peter that he desired to remain always on Mount Thabor, how enraptured shall we be when we behold the Sun of Justice in all His glory, and when we partake of the delights of the elect! When the Saviour permitted the three disciples, Peter, James, and John to behold the splendor of His glory and majesty on the Mount, He had shortly before prophesied to them His passion, His death, and resurrection, and He wished, without doubt, by His transfiguration to strengthen their faith in Him. Furthermore, to prevent them from doubting, when they should behold Him later in His humiliation and ignominy, and to encourage them by a foretaste of the glory which awaited them in heaven, to bear with patience the sufferings and tribulations of this life. The thought of the joys of heaven is a powerful means to enable us to bear patiently all the troubles and vexations of this life, as I will show you briefly.

A few days before His transfiguration, Jesus told His disciples

that He was going to Jerusalem, there to suffer and to die, and to rise again on the third day, and He added, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. xvi. 24.) At these words the disciples were sad. Therefore, He said for their consolation: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His Angels: and then will He render to every man according to his works," and shortly afterward He gave these three a foretaste of heavenly glory by making them witnesses of His transfiguration. Now they knew what awaited them, if they denied themselves and carried their cross patiently after their Master; they could now speak from experience and give consolation to all souls in tribulation, that they would one day be glorified with the Lord, if they suffered here below steadfastly with Him. In fact, there is no better means to encourage and fortify us in our trials than the remembrance of the heavenly reward. "If thou desirest to make all thy cares and work light," says St. Augustine, "then think on thy reward." The husbandman, for instance, would not till his field in the sweat of his brow, did he not hope for a rich harvest to reward his toil. But the reward which will be ours in heaven, is so incomparably great, that if we have the happiness of getting to heaven, we shall wonder how it was possible that we merited it by the little work which we accomplished here below. Holy Job consoled himself with the thought of heaven, when he had lost all his children, had been robbed of his possessions, and in his misery was mocked by his own wife. King David, too, thought of heaven, when he was forsaken by everybody, and pressed hard by the enemy. "For my father and my mother have left me, but the Lord hath taken me up. I believe (and hope) to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." (Ps. lvi. 10.) "What," asks St. Augustine, "what softened the hail of stones to St. Stephen?" The sight of heaven opened up to him, and Jesus Christ was standing ready to receive His faithful servant, and to crown him. It is just this thought of heaven which consoled and fortified the other Martyrs to such an extent that they uttered songs of praise in the midst of the most cruel torments, and met death rejoicing. Fortified by this conviction that their reward would be great in heaven, thousands upon thousands in this world have forsaken their possessions, honors, and joys, to serve God in solitude, by works of penance and mortification, and they have fought manfully and willingly all the assaults of the evil one.

If the poor and the oppressed only thought of heaven, they would not complain so much at their misery; if those in sorrow thought of heaven, they would not be so impatient; if we all thought more about heaven, and of the inexpressible great joy which the Lord has promised to those who love Him, we should not so frequently get discouraged at crosses and sufferings, at temptations and dangers, but we should tread in the footsteps of the Saints, and regard all cares and work, all struggles and self-denials, all suffering and vexations as light and easy to bear, and rejoice that God has given us the opportunity by crosses and sufferings to deserve heaven. For, dear Christian, the good God, who desires and seeks our salvation, often sends us tribulations and hardships, so as to make us averse to the vanities of this world, and to induce us to long all the more ardently for the immortal joys of heaven, and to make us strive after them more zealously. "And if we had to undergo daily the greatest sufferings," says St. Augustine, "even if for a time we had to endure the pains of hell, it would not be too much, to be able to behold Christ in His glory." All sufferings come to an end, but the joys of heaven have no end. All the goods of this world are vain and perishable; they can not satisfy and content the heart of man, which requires eternal and immortal possessions. For this reason, the same St. Augustine cries out: "My heart is restless till it finds its rest in Thee, O God!"

Look often up to heaven, dear Christians, not only when you are visited with crosses and sufferings, but also when everything goes well with you in this world, that you might say with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make here three tabernacles." The thought of heaven will console you in affliction, and prevent you in your happiness from allowing your heart to cling to the idle and transitory things of this world, and thereby forget to strive after the eternal and imperishable goods of heaven, which alone can make you happy. A bird shut up in a cage is better cared for than his feathered brethren in the open; he does not suffer from heat or cold, he has not to seek his own food, he need not fear the snare, and yet if this bird sees the green trees, and notices the other birds fly past the window, he finds his cage too narrow for him, he would like to fly away, and he tries to gain his freedom by thrusting his head through the bars. And we, dear Christians, whose souls are imprisoned in our miserable bodies, we who are in our earthly prison, are subjected to privations, sufferings, and afflictions, why should we

not long for the day, when, released from all these miseries, we shall partake of the happiness of the children of God? Ought we not to strive to merit this blessedness by keeping the commandments of God, and bearing patiently the sufferings of this life?

Would that our desire for heaven were so great that we could say daily with David: "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiii. 3); or with St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," (Phil. i. 23); then no work would be too hard, no struggle too severe, no affliction too bitter. We should do all in our power with the assistance of divine grace, to merit heaven, into which, one day, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may lead you and me. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

"And he was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb."—Luke xi. 14.

To be possessed by the devil, like the poor man in to-day's Gospel, is without doubt a great misfortune. However, it is not my intention to-day to describe to you the condition of one possessed by the devil. I would rather teach you the art of driving out the devil. You will ask: "But who, then, is possessed by the devil?" Would to God that there were no such persons in our midst; but I fear, alas, that there are many among us who are possessed of the devil. You are astonished, and perhaps incredulous. But I tell you, that whosoever has committed a mortal sin, is possessed of a devil; indeed, I will even venture further, and say with St. Chrysostom: "He who commits a mortal sin is more miserable than one possessed by the devil." Now, how can we drive out this devil? I answer, *by a good confession,* and I will explain this further to you to-day.

You are aware that the first requisite for the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance, is a heartfelt contrition for sins committed, joined by a firm determination to sin no more, and to avoid the occasions of sin; secondly, we must accuse ourselves of our sins fully and contritely to the priest, who is God's representative; thirdly, we must have the firm desire of making satisfaction for our sins. If the penitent fulfils these three obligations, he obtains, by the priest's absolution, the forgiveness of his sins, and the devil, who has taken

up his abode in his heart, must retire, for the Saviour said to His Apostles and their successors: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John xx. 23.) The Saviour certainly did not intend that the Apostles should remit the sins of all sinners without distinction, otherwise, He would have said: "Forgive all men their sins." As He Himself only forgave the sins of contrite and repentant sinners, He wished also that the Apostles should in His name, as the representatives of God, only forgive the sins of those sinners who were truly repentant, and had made the firm resolution of doing better, thereby rendering themselves worthy of the forgiveness of their sins. The divine Saviour was omniscient. He looked into the hearts of men, and knew their sins, their repentance, their firm purpose of amendment. That is why it was not necessary for the repentant sinner to confess his sins to Him. But this was not the case with the Apostles. They could not see into men's hearts, therefore, they did not know how much this or that one had sinned, or whether, according to their repentance and good resolutions, they were worthy of having their sins forgiven or not. But the Apostles had to know this before they could remit sins, or retain them, and for this reason the sinners who desired to obtain the forgiveness of their sins from the Apostles, as the representatives of God, had to confess their sins to them sincerely and fully, and had to show that they had a true repentance, and an earnest desire of amendment; that is to say, they had to *confess* to the Apostles. This power to forgive sins which the Apostles received from Jesus, was handed down in accordance with their appointment by Jesus, to their successors, the Bishops and priests. These, also, must know what sins man had committed, to be able to give absolution, and to prove whether he was repentant and desired to amend, he was obliged to confess to the priests. Then only can the sinner hope and obtain from God the forgiveness of his sins. Therefore, St. John says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (I John i. 9.) And St. Ambrose writes: "He who accuses himself, begins already to be just, for he does not spare himself, and confesses the justice of God." In these three words, "I have sinned," there rises to heaven a flame of sacrifice to the Lord. Confession is the salvation of the soul, the destruction of vice, the victory over the devil: it shuts the gates of hell, and opens the gates of heaven.

Our Lord has shown us in the parable of the king who made a wedding feast for his son, how bad it is not to confess our sins openly and contritely. There were a great number at this wedding, rich and poor, high and low, good and bad. Now, when the king came to look at the people, he saw a guest who had no wedding garment on, and he said to him, "Friend, how camest thou hither without having on a wedding garment?" The poor man, who felt guilty, could make no reply, "he was dumb," thus, as St. Augustine explains this, neglecting the confession of his guilt, by which, without doubt, he would have obtained mercy and forgiveness. The king said to his servants: "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This man was not punished because he had no wedding garment on, but because he remained dumb when he was asked about it, and would not confess his guilt. Had he done this, he would undoubtedly have been forgiven. This shows you, dear Christians, what we have to expect if, after having sinned, we do not confess our sins to the priest, who is God's representative, so that we may obtain forgiveness. The sinner, who either from malice or false shame, does not confess his sins, is on the way to perdition. God, the king of heaven and earth, will one day pass this sentence upon him: "Bind his hands and his feet, and cast him into exterior darkness." But in hell there is no more time to confess our sins. Have you, perhaps, dear Christians, through false shame, concealed a sin, and thereby received the Sacrament of Penance unworthily and without grace? Go then, and throw yourself at the feet of Jesus, and beseech Him humbly, and with deep confidence for courage and strength, and He will drive the devil of false shame out of your heart, which had made you dumb. Speak openly in confession, without reserve; confess all your sins, those also which you are ashamed of confessing, for thus only can you obtain forgiveness by making a full and contrite confession of your sins. If, however, you omit a sin in your confession, through your own fault, you receive the Sacrament of Penance unworthily, and you take home with you from the confessional another sin besides the old ones.

Let us, then, in these days, my dear Christians, make a full, open, and repentant confession, so that we may obtain forgiveness, and have the evil spirit driven out of our hearts! But let us also, after having obtained forgiveness, watch and pray and struggle so that the evil spirit may not return to take up his abode in our hearts! Let us

keep our good resolutions and not sin anew, that the last thing may not be worse than the first! Those only who persevere unto the end, will receive the crown. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

"And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased."—John vi. 2.

The five thousand people who were fed with the five barley loaves and the two fishes, deserved, no doubt, that the Saviour should take pity upon them, and care for their wants in such a miraculous way, for they had left house and home, suspended their business and labor, and had followed the Saviour into the wilderness, and had remained with Him for three days without food or drink; but if we examine closely into their actions, and ask what had driven them to do this, we shall find that their zeal in no wise deserves the praise which we were inclined to lavish upon them at first sight. Why, then, did they follow the Saviour? St. John answers: "Because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were infirm." It was the splendor of His miracles, the extraordinary in His deeds and talk, that attracted them, and it was, therefore, more out of curiosity than a desire of salvation, that induced them to follow the Saviour into the desert. So long as He supplied them with food and drink, so long as He cured the sick, and raised the dead to life, they said: "Surely he is the prophet who was to come into the world." They stayed with Him, and even wanted to make Him king; but when, soon afterwards, He spoke of the mysterious bread that He would give to His faithful—when He said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world," etc. (John vi. 51, 52), they murmured and said, "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" and "after this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Dear Christians, are there not many people nowadays who behave in like manner? As long as the sun of prosperity shines upon them, that they have no crosses and sufferings to endure, and everything goes according to their wishes, just so long they praise and bless God, and cling to Him; but as soon as misfortune is at their door, and troubles, suffering,

and afflictions fall upon them, they murmur and complain, and forsake their God. *It is not a great thing to remain faithful to God in prosperity, but it is a great thing and meritorious not to waver in adversity, but to remain faithful to God*, as we shall learn to-day.

It is an old experience that most men only remain steadfast in the love of God so long as all goes well, but that they fall away at the least sign of trouble. As long as the Israelites in the desert received their manna from heaven, God was good; but when one day the water gave out, they were immediately discontented, and they murmured without ceasing. The Apostle Peter vowed at the Last Supper that he was ready to go to prison and to death with Christ, but after Jesus was imprisoned, and a servant maid asked him whether he, too, did belong to Jesus' disciples, and because he was afraid of trouble if he spoke the truth, he denied that he knew His Master, and would have nothing to do with Him. When Jesus, at the request of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, wanted to go to raise Lazarus from the dead, no one was more anxious than Thomas. He said, "Let us also go that we may die with him." (John xi. 16.) When Thomas said this he had nothing to fear; but as soon as Jesus was taken prisoner in the Garden of Olives, and it was probable that His disciples would share the same fate, then Thomas forsook his Master,—he fled, and only returned to the other Apostles after Jesus had risen from the dead. O how many Christians may be compared to these Apostles Peter and Thomas! How many there are willing enough to go with Christ to Mount Thabor, but who will not follow Him to Mount Calvary! How many who persevere in the love of God, in imitating Jesus, in virtue and fear of God as long as everything goes well with them, and they have nothing hard to bear, and nothing to fear; but as soon as they perceive trials from afar, as soon as they have to overcome a great temptation for the love of God and of Jesus Christ, or to undergo hardships, as soon as their virtue is tried in the furnace of tribulation, they lose courage, and forget the vow of fidelity which they took at baptism, and which they have so often renewed. No, dear Christians, our fidelity is not tried in the days of prosperity, but in the days of adversity. Then we show whether we love with the lips only, or in deed and truth; then it is made known if we are true friends of God or not; then our virtue and fear of God are put to a severe test, and happy are we if we do not doubt God and His providence, if our confidence is not shaken, if we do not stray from the path of God's commandments,

or murmur and complain and lose our patience, no matter how great the affliction may be which God has allowed to overtake us. To remain faithful to God in affliction, to praise and bless Him not only when He blesses us, but also when He smites us, this is great and praiseworthy, this deserves the crown of eternal life. For this reason St. James does not consider those blessed who here below have nothing but pleasant times, and no struggles to undergo, but those who remain faithful to the Lord until death, in the midst of cares and hardships. "Blessed is the man," saith he, "that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him." (James i. 12.)

Let us then, my dear Christians, serve God, not only in good times, but in bad times. When the Lord sends you poverty and want, trouble and vexations, sufferings and afflictions, when your disorderly senses, or the world, or the devil, cause you violent temptations, do not be discouraged, remain faithful to God, bear your afflictions patiently, fight courageously against all temptations, that you may increase in virtue and merits. And that you may be in good condition for this, partake frequently of that Bread of the strong which Jesus Christ has left us in the Most Holy Sacrament of His flesh and blood. When the prophet Elias fled from Queen Jezabel who sought his life, he sank down exhausted and disconsolate under a juniper tree in the desert, where he fell asleep. He was suddenly awakened by an angel, who told him to arise and eat. He arose, and ate, and drank twice of what the angel brought him, and he was so fortified thereby, that for forty days and nights he required no more food, and he was enabled to proceed as far as Mount Horeb. If Elias was strengthened in such a manner by some bread, and a drink of water, that he was enabled to accomplish so long a journey without danger, what strength and fortitude do we not partake of when we receive that life-giving Bread of Angels in the Holy Eucharist, after a worthy preparation! Yes, dear Christians, fortified with this, we can persevere on the way of the commandments of God, and make the journey to our heavenly country without difficulty. Let us then in this holy Paschal time, after an earnest preparation, approach the table of the Lord, and correspond with the graces which we there receive, so that we may obtain the crown of victory which the Lord has promised to those who persevere in patience and all virtues unto the end. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

"Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple."—John viii. 59.

When Jesus, our divine Saviour, was teaching one day in the Temple at Jerusalem, after He had censured the Pharisees, they took up stones to throw at Him. He, however, made Himself invisible, and left the Temple. Jesus, who enters into the heart of man when it is in a state of sanctifying grace, and there takes up His abode as in the Temple, forsakes it when man commits sin, and the devil takes possession of the heart, which Jesus, the Son of God, had chosen for His dwelling-place. *But woe unto that house which the Lord God has deserted! Woe to that soul which has lost sanctifying grace!* I will explain this further to you to-day.

It needs no proof that a city, a village, a house, must of necessity be unfortunate as soon as it is deserted by God; for from Him proceeds, as St. James says, every good and perfect gift. (James i. 17.) And when He departs, all happiness, salvation, and blessing leave with Him. If we wish to be convinced of this, we have only to open the Holy Scriptures. We read, for instance, that in the same proportion as men multiplied upon earth, sins and vice took the upper hand, and that in consequence of this, God had decided to punish the ungodly race with a great flood. Before carrying out His intention, He departed from men. "My spirit shall not remain in man forever, because he is flesh." (Gen. vi. 3.) Upon this the flood came, and wiped out the whole human race. Only Noe, who had found grace before the Lord, was saved with his family, for "Noe was a just and perfect man in his generation; he walked with God." (Gen. vi. 9.) In the same way, Lot, together with his wife and his two daughters, were led out of Sodom by an angel and saved, because he was a just man and God fearing. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, with their entire population, were destroyed from the face of the earth by fire and brimstone because these people had given themselves up to the horrors of ungodliness. And who amongst you does not know of the awful fate which befell the glorious city of Jerusalem and its temple, which was a wonder of the world? Christ Himself was moved to tears when one day He looked upon it, and thought of its destruction. And why was this holy city, together with its magnificent temple, destroyed? Because its inhabitants would not believe

in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His teaching, and finally they led Him out of the city to nail Him to the cross.

You see, then, dear Christians, how sad it is when God, the giver of all good, forsakes a people, or a community, or a family. Then His justice takes the place of His mercy, and instead of happiness and blessing, we feel His just chastisements according to the number of sins which men have committed. As God treated those people and that community, in the same way does He proceed against each separate man who becomes guilty of a mortal sin. By sin, man forsakes God, and God then forsakes him. And woe to them whom God forsakes! Woe to that soul whence the grace of God has departed! With grace it has lost its beauty, its wealth, and its life. "As the soul is the life of the body," says St. Augustine, "so is God the life of the soul." Three times did Samson escape from the hands of his enemies, but the fourth time they overcame him, his strength gave out. He said to himself: "I will go out as I did before," but Holy Scripture adds: "He did not escape," not knowing that the Lord had departed from him. So long as Saul obeyed the prophet Samuel, God was with him, and gave him the victory over his enemies; but when, after the death of Samuel, he forsook the Lord, transgressed His commandments, and consulted the witch, the Lord departed from him: he lost the battle, his sons were killed, and he took his own life in despair. "The Lord is far from the wicked," says the wise Solomon" (Prov. xv. 28), therefore they are unhappy.

We are often surprised, dear Christians, that this or that man, with all his diligence, is not blessed, and remains poor, whilst others under the same circumstances enjoy an ever-increasing prosperity; that this or that family meet with so many misfortunes and sufferings; that this or that one is so often afflicted with illness. We can not understand why it is that so many persons, in spite of every appearance of happiness are really so unhappy, that in their despair they often wish for death, or, as it so often happens nowadays, they commit suicide; but it does not occur to us that the cause of all these evils is sin, otherwise we should not be so astonished. When through sin man has forsaken God, then God forsakes him, and the evil spirit takes possession of his heart, in which the spirit of God wished to dwell as in a temple, and he makes man as unhappy as he possibly can.

What shall I say of the torments which conscience prepares for the sinner? When the Lord has forsaken him, peace leaves him; tormented by the reproaches of his conscience, he finds no peace any-

where, and the words of Holy Writ are fulfilled in him: "'There is no peace to the wicked,' saith the Lord God." (Is. lvii. 21.) Shall I remind you finally of the chastisements of hell, which await the sinner, and which may fall upon him at any moment? No, dear Christians, what I have already mentioned is sufficient to convince you that there is no greater misery than that of a man forsaken by God. What an unutterably great evil sin is! It throws men into this misery; it robs their souls of sanctifying grace, and at the same time of their beauty, wealth, and life itself; it causes God to forsake them, and to mete out to them *the* punishment which the sinner has deserved for his sins! Surely, "Sin maketh nations miserable" (Prov. xiv. 34), as Holy Scripture says.

Let us, therefore, my dear Christians, during this holy Lenten season, practise works of penance and return to God, so that we may again possess sanctifying grace, and thereby become worthy to receive the spirit of God into our hearts again, there to dwell as in a temple. Let us, moreover, consider and preserve sanctifying grace as the most precious treasure of our soul! Let us flee from sin as we would at the sight of a snake! Let us watch and pray that we fall not into temptation! Let us spend the heavenly strength of which we shall partake in our Easter Communion for the working out of our salvation! Let us pray to-day and always with the Psalmist: "Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit. Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels." (Ps. l.) Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Matt. xxi. 9.

To-day we celebrate the solemn entry of the Saviour into Jerusalem, and we must acknowledge with praise the behavior of the Jews. The Gospel tells us "that a very great multitude accompanied Him, and spread their garments in the way; and others cut down boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!" My dear Christians, the same Saviour who to-day made such a solemn entry into Jerusalem, will enter into our hearts during the holy Paschal time, and it is meet that we should receive Him with the same rejoicings and reverence, as the Jews did. Let us, then, learn to-day, *what exterior and interior reverence we should show Him in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.*

(1) As often as King Darius went to war, he took along with him a picture of the sun, mounted on a costly wagon, and now and again it was shown to the warriors amidst the clashing of cymbals, with the command that each one of them should fall on his knees, and adore it. If those pagans showed such veneration for this picture of the sun, and placed it among their gods, it is surely right and fitting that we should bend our knee in adoration and reverence before the Blessed Sacrament which is the true Body and the true Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the sun of justice, as the Apostles call Him, every time that it is exposed for veneration, or that we receive it. As Moses was once feeding the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro, on Mount Horeb, the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he saw that the bush was on fire and was not burnt. Moses wanted to go and see this great sight closer, but the Lord said to him: "Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest, is holy ground." (Exod. iii. 5.) From this you can learn how we should behave ourselves in this holy place, where Christ, the Son of God, is present, and who even desires to enter into our hearts. If God commanded Moses to take off his shoes before he trod upon the place where the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush, what reverence must we show where Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar? How profound should our humiliation be, and how fervently we should adore Him when He enters into our hearts at Holy Communion? In fact, it is fitting that we should imitate those four-and-twenty ancients, of whom St. John writes in his Apocalypse: "The four-and-twenty ancients fell down before him that sitteth on the throne, and adored him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'Thou are worthy, O Lord, our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power, because thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and have been created.'" (Apoc. iv. 10, 11.)

(2) Christ is not satisfied with an exterior reverence only. He requires an interior one, and this consists in cleansing our hearts from

sin, and adorning them with virtues, and making ourselves so worthy that in the Holy Eucharist He may enter into our hearts and dwell there. When we are expecting an honored guest, we clean house, and get rid of everything which might displease the guest. In the same way we must cleanse our hearts from the rubbish of sin, if Jesus Christ, the purest of the pure, is to become our guest. This is pointed out to us by the conduct of the Patriarch Jacob, who, when he had built an altar to the one true God, and desired to offer a sacrifice upon it, he assembled his whole household and said: "Cast away the strange gods that are among you, and be cleansed, and change your garments." (Gen. xxxv. 2.) Whereupon they brought him all the strange gods, and he buried them under the turpentine tree. The human soul is a temple of God. "Know you not," says the Apostle, "that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And further on: "The temple of God is holy, which you are." (I Cor. iii. 16, 17.) In this temple God desires to dwell alone, and He will not suffer that an altar shall be erected therein, and a sacrifice offered to strange gods. The strange gods which most men worship are self-love, sensuality, and money, and others. And if, dear Christians, we have placed these strange gods in the temple of God, I mean in our souls, then the invitation is meant for us. "Cast away the strange gods among you, and cleanse yourselves." Cast out of your hearts sensuality, which fills it with impure thoughts, images, and desires, and excites us to unchaste actions. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God! Put out of your hearts inordinate self-love, and put in its place the love of God! Cast out the love of money and possessions, of honor and esteem, of joys and pleasures, and all the other idols which you have placed in the recesses of your hearts! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and true God like the Father, wishes to enter into your hearts, and He will not have there any strange gods; He wishes to live and reign therein alone.

For this purpose, the heart must not only be purified from sin and all attachment to sin, but it must be adorned with virtues. When a dear friend comes to see us, we not only clean the house, but we adorn it to the best of our ability. Behold, in the Holy Eucharist, thy dear Lord and Saviour who redeemed thee with His most Precious Blood, and who day after day lavishes the inexhaustible treasures of His graces upon thee, and who will one day admit thee to His heavenly kingdom. He enters into thy heart as guest to dwell there

continually. Must thou not do all in thy power to adorn thy heart worthily? Upon one occasion, when the Emperor Augustus gave a banquet, he desired that every one who was bidden to the feast should appear there in a new garment. Jesus Christ, the king of heaven and earth, prepares a banquet at this Paschal time, such as no earthly potentate could prepare, and He invites millions, and millions of Catholic Christians in all parts of the world to this feast. At this banquet He places before us no ordinary food, but His most sacred Body and Blood. He also commands us to appear thereat in a new garment, and He calls to us by His Holy Church: "Put on a new man," lay aside all sin, and adorn yourselves with the garment of virtue! "Let no one dare," says St. Chrysostom, "to appear at the table of the Lord as Judas did, no miser, no uncharitable or hard-hearted or merciless person, no unchaste person."

Let us, therefore, dear Christians, prepare our heart that it may be converted into a worthy dwelling for so beloved a guest! Let us purify it from every sin by a sincere repentance, and adorn it with virtues! "Behold, thy King cometh!" Let us hasten to meet Him! Let us fall at His feet and worship Him humbly as our Lord and our God! Enter into your hearts with gladness and reverence, and cry out with the jubilant multitudes, "Blessed is he, that cometh in the name of the Lord." Amen.

EASTER.

"He is risen."—Mark xvi. 6.

What Christian does not rejoice with the Church to-day, and sing joyfully: "This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad, and rejoice therein"? (Ps. cxvii. 24.) Jesus, our blessed Redeemer, who breathed His last, and gave up His life amidst the most terrible sufferings, broke the bonds of death, and, true to His oft-repeated promise, He arose gloriously from the grave upon the third day. "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here." The great work of our redemption is now accomplished, the debt of sin is paid, hell is overpowered, man is reconciled to God, and the gates of heaven are opened to us. Therefore, we say exultantly with the Church: "*This*

is the day which the Lord hath made!" Let us take these words to-day as the object of our consideration!

Although all the days of the year are the Lord's days because He made them, still we can say preferably of to-day: "This is the day which the Lord hath made." So as to give you a proof of this I ask: What makes the day? Nothing else but the light of the sun. As soon as the sun rises in the early morning it disperses the darkness of night, and it becomes gradually clearer and brighter the higher the sun rises in the heavens. This day which the Church celebrates with jubilation does not obtain its light and brilliancy from the sun which shines in the heavens, but from Jesus Christ, who is the sun of justice. We may say of this day what St. John writes of the heavenly city of Jerusalem: "The city hath no need of the sun nor of the moon; for the glory of God hath enlightened it; and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." (Apoc. xxi. 23.) This sun went down on Good Friday; Christ was dead and laid in the tomb; in the early dawn of Easter morn this sun rose again behind the hill of Calvary, and spread its light farther and farther, and refreshed and rejoiced millions upon millions with its gracious rays; Jesus Christ is again risen from the grave, to die no more, "death shall no more have dominion over him." (Rom. vi. 9.)

But, dear Christians, Christ not only broke the bonds of death, and came forth living from the tomb, He has also redeemed the whole human race from the bonds of sin, of death and of hell, wherein they lay helplessly imprisoned since the fall of Adam. He has given health and life to our souls again, which we had lost through sin, and which we could never have regained of our own strength. Therefore, the prophet Isaias says of Him: "Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins, the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him, and by his bruises we are healed." (Is. liii. 4.) I can make the truth of this clearer to you by a parable. Suppose that a man, walking in an orchard, invited by the loveliness of the fruit which looked so tempting, plucked an unripe apple, ate it, and perhaps afterwards took a drink of water. All at once he feels sick and becomes feverish. The doctor being sent for, examines the patient, considers his condition rather serious, and prescribes heroic remedies to drive the poisons out of his system. This was our condition, my dear Christians. Eve saw a

tree in Paradise, the fruit of which delighted her, and "she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat." (Gen. iii. 6.) The enjoyment of this fruit plunged them and the entire human race into a mortal sickness. The heavenly physician of souls came, gave them a severe reprimand, forbade them all those pleasures which they might have enjoyed in Paradise, and prescribed heroic remedies for them by saying to Adam: "Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow, until thou shalt return again to the earth from which thou wast taken;" and to Eve: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee." Notwithstanding everything that Adam and Eve and all their descendants strove to do, to make satisfaction to the will of God, they were not able to cure the illness into which they had fallen through sin; they could not liberate themselves from sin, they could not recover the true life of the soul which they had lost by sin. For this reason the pious people of the old law cried out unceasingly: "O Lord, have mercy on us, for we have waited for thee!" (Is. xxxiii. 2.) In the fulness of time their prayer was heard; God sent His only begotten Son, not to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him, and He came as a heavenly physician, to cure us of all our ills and afflictions, to make our souls healthy again, and to give them true life; in a word, He came to seek and to redeem that which was lost. And who does not know what He suffered to accomplish the great work of our redemption? Holy week, in which we were reminded of this, has just passed away, and the remembrance of the passion of Jesus must be so fresh in your minds that it is unnecessary for me to describe it to you. If you reflect upon the words of St. Peter: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ" (I. Peter i. 18), you will understand that to-day, when we celebrate the victory of Jesus over sin, death and hell, we have every reason to cry out joyfully: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein."

Dear Christians! To-day brings us glad tidings, too. When the patriarch Jacob was informed that his beloved son Joseph, whose death he had mourned for many long years, was living, and was the ruler over Egypt, "he awaked, as it were, out of a deep sleep; his spirit revived," and he cried out joyfully, "It is enough for me if Joseph, my son, be yet living: I will go and see him before I die."

(Gen. xlv. 26.) To-day an angel brings another glad message. "Christ is risen." Oh, may this message have the same effect upon us as the news that his son lived had upon the patriarch Jacob. May we arise from the sleep of sin! The servants of God have called to us long enough: "The night is passed, the day has dawned; lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light! Arise, you who sleep, and Christ will enlighten you!" O may we then listen to this voice! May our spirit be revived! Let us, after receiving the holy Paschal Communion, begin to lead a new life, to avoid sin, and to keep the commandments of God, that we may partake of the blessed fruits of the resurrection of Jesus. Amen.

LOW SUNDAY.

"Peace be to you."—John xx. 19.

Christ, the risen Saviour, at His reappearance amongst His disciples, can wish them nothing better than peace. He comes to them when the doors were shut, stands in their midst, and the first word that He says to them is "Peace be to you!" He not only wishes them peace, but He ordains a means by which they can obtain peace of soul, namely, the Sacrament of Penance, when He says to His disciples: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." We, too, obtain peace in the Sacrament of Penance, which Christ has merited for us by His passion and death, and by His resurrection from the dead, and this is what he wished His disciples to-day. You have become partakers of this peace, my dear Christians, if according to the precept of Holy Church you have received the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and you will enjoy this peace as long as you keep the good resolutions which you made on receiving the Sacraments, and by not relapsing into your old habits of sin. That peace is a most precious possession is evident from the fact that Christ, when He saw His disciples for the first time after the Resurrection, could wish them nothing better than peace. "Peace is so great a blessing," says St. Augustine, "that we can possess nothing more agreeable or more useful." We must therefore strive our utmost to preserve this peace, and as it

might be lost by a relapse into sin, I know of no better subject to-day than to tell you *three means by which you can avoid relapsing into sin,* hoping that by making use of the same you will preserve the peace of your souls.

You know, my dear brethren, that to keep yourselves from relapsing into sin you must watch and pray, and avoid all the dangerous occasions of sin. I shall not speak to-day of these means; I will give you three other means and say, to avoid relapsing into sin you must:

1. *Think frequently of the miserable condition in which you found yourself when you were burdened with grievous sin, and of the peace of soul which you now enjoy after having received absolution;*
2. *Renew your good resolutions often,* and,
3. *Go to Holy Communion more frequently.*

1. What was the state of your soul when you were still sinners? You had no peace, you were full of disquietude, fear and anxiety. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord." (Is. xlviii. 22.) Your conscience continually reproached you for your sins and offenses, and reminded you of the punishment which you had deserved from the just God whom you had so grievously offended and angered. And when you tried to quiet the voice of your conscience by sensual pleasures, this affected peace was only of short duration, and very soon the thought would obtrude itself again: "You have offended God, and if, as might possibly happen, you should die suddenly in your sins, you would be lost for all eternity," and this thought alone would be sufficient to rob you of all peace and joy. What torture a bad conscience causes man, and to what length it will lead we have seen in Judas. No sooner had he perpetrated the wicked act of betraying his divine Master, and had received the blood money, such despair seized upon him that he took a halter and hanged himself. It is indeed true what the Lord says, that "there is no peace to the wicked."

How different is the condition of your soul at present when it is purified from sin through the Sacrament of Penance, and is a partaker of that peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, which the world cannot give, and which is more precious than all earthly possessions. You are no longer made uneasy by the reproaches of your conscience, you can think of God with joy; you need no longer be afraid of death; now you can taste how sweet the Lord is to

those who love Him, and you must acknowledge with the royal prophet, that one day spent in His holy courts is better than a thousand days spent in the service of sin. In a word, as great as was your torment and fear formerly, so great is your peace and joy now. "Much peace have they that love thy law (O Lord), and to them there is no stumbling block." (Ps. cxviii. 165.) And "a secure mind is like a continual feast." (Prov. xv. 15.) If you compare your present happy state with that misery in which you were as a sinner, how can you so easily exchange this happiness for your former suffering and fear? Only a fool would give away the precious bread of heaven for bad bread made of bran, or a priceless pearl for worthless clay! A good means to avoid relapsing into sin is then to compare the present condition of our soul with the past.

2. *A second means is to renew frequently the good resolutions,* which we made when we received the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. This means is warmly recommended to us by all those who in the course of centuries have by their virtues and holy lives attained the highest pinnacle of perfection. In fact, a man who has formed an alliance of love with God, frequently renewed and fortified, and who daily fosters in his heart a lively horror of sin, and who strives to persevere in all good, will not so easily break faith in the hour of temptation, and will use every means to avoid relapsing into sin. Friends who often assure one another of their mutual fidelity will not easily be unfaithful to one another, and a subject does not easily rise up against his master when he has frequently required to make a vow of allegiance. If, then, you have the earnest desire of not falling into sin again, swear fidelity to God often; do this every day. The best time for this is in the morning when you rise, before beginning your day's work, at noontime if you should happen to hear the Angelus, and at night when your day's work is over, and you are going to rest. Then renew your good resolutions, promise the Lord fidelity and perseverance in good, equip yourself with new strength against the assaults of the evil one, and you will find that you will become daily more and more strengthened, and you will make progress in the way of salvation. Do not say that because of temporal cares and business affairs you have no time; for *one* moment is enough in which to accomplish this sanctifying and useful practice. A single pious thought of God, a single good thought is sufficient, to place you in the condition, by the help of God's grace, to avoid sin, and to persevere in good. I say with

the help of God's grace, for without this, as you well know, we are incapable of doing the least good. But you will participate in the grace of God if you

3. *Employ the third means, namely, if you frequently approach the Sacraments.*

The heavenly food which is given to us in the Holy Eucharist fortifies, as St. Lawrence Justinian says, the powers of our soul against relapses into sin, to which our nature and the tempter excite us, and it gives us strength to walk steadfastly in the path of virtue and salvation. When the prophet Elias fled from the persecutions of the infamous Jezabel, he lay down exhausted under a tree, and fell asleep, and behold! an angel of the Lord approached him, awakened him and fed him with the most delicious bread. Elias ate, but immediately afterwards he fell asleep again; the angel waited not, but awakened him again, and behold! when he tasted the bread for the second time, he was so strengthened by it that he "walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God, Horeb." (III. Kings xix. 8.) And you, too, dear Christian, are weak, and, as you know from experience, you require strength to avoid sin, and to walk in the way of the commandments. When you are persecuted by the evil one, when the world and your own flesh entice you to sin, and it is hard to withstand them, receive often the Bread of Angels, and this will give you the strength to ascend the mount of Christian perfection. You may ask, perhaps, dear Christian, why Elias fell asleep again after receiving the Bread of Angels? why he was strengthened a second time for the journey? I make answer: So that, if after receiving the Sacraments you should fall again through weakness, you must not be discouraged. Approach them again and again; not one Communion, but the frequent reception of the Sacraments strengthens against a relapse into sin; the powers of your soul will grow more and more the oftener you receive them. Alas! in these days, sin and vice take the upper hand for no other reason but because Christians approach the Sacraments too seldom to fortify their souls with the Bread of Life. Many persons consider that they have done a great deal if they go to Holy Communion three or four times a year, many even only going once a year. It cannot therefore be surprising that the powers of their souls become weaker and weaker, and the slightest temptation causes them to fall.

If then, dear Christians, you wish to be preserved from relapsing

into sin, and to enjoy continually that peace which the Saviour wishes you to-day, employ the means which I have to-day given you. Think often of the misery in which you were before your Easter confession, and on that blessed peace which is now yours. Renew as often as possible your good resolutions, and fortify yourselves frequently with the Bread of Angels in the Holy Eucharist. In this way the Lord will be on your side in every temptation. He will preserve you from relapsing, and give you the victory over the enemy of your salvation. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

"I am the good shepherd."—John x. 11.

Our Saviour is a master whom it is sweet to serve, for He promises: "Where I am, there also shall my minister be." (John xii. 26.) Can a servant ask more? If our God is a warrior, it is good to fight under His flag; "For great power always belonged to thee alone: and who shall resist the strength of thy arm?" (Wisdom xi. 22.) Our Lord is also a tradesman, and it is good to trade with Him, for He says: "You that have no money, make haste, buy, and eat, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price." (Is. lv. 1.) In to-day's Gospel He calls Himself a shepherd, and it is good to be one of His sheep, for He is a good shepherd. I wish to show you to-day that

I. *He is indeed a good shepherd, and*
II. *To specify to you how His sheep should be conditioned.*

1. It was already foretold by the prophets that Jesus Christ would be a good shepherd. For instance, the Lord, speaking through the prophet Ezechiel, said: "I will set up one shepherd over them: he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." (xxxiv. 23.) Because Jesus came as a shepherd, He was therefore born in a stable, a manger was His first couch, and shepherds were the first to come and visit Him, and adore Him. When later He began to teach He took care to assemble the scattered sheep of Israel, and He knows of no better way of picturing His love for men than by comparing Himself to a good shepherd, who leaves the ninety and nine sheep in the desert to seek one that is lost. He tells us that those of His sheep will be admitted to the heavenly stable who

listen to His voice and obey it. After His resurrection He ordained Peter to be His representative, to be the shepherd of His lambs and of His sheep, that is to say, of all the faithful, saying that at the day of judgment He like a shepherd will separate the sheep from the goats, the good from the bad, giving to the former their reward, and to the latter their punishment. He proves Himself in every way a shepherd, and if you wish to convince yourself that He is a good shepherd, reflect what He has done for us, His sheep, and what He still does.

Is it necessary for me, dear Christians, to relate what Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has done for us, His sheep? He left the glory of His Father, which was before the world existed, took flesh from Mary, the ever blessed Virgin, was born in a wretched stable, and bore all the pains and sufferings of this earthly life. "Who having joy set before him, endured the cross." (Heb. xii. 2.) Shall I enumerate for you the persecutions and pains which He suffered for us from His birth, until His death upon the cross? A few moments would not be sufficient for this. But if it be true, which we can not deny, that no greater proof of love can be given by man than to lay down his life for his friend, then Christ has shown an inexpressibly great love toward us; for He gave His life for us, who were His enemies by sin. In fact, He is a good shepherd, for "the good shepherd giveth His life for His sheep." He leads His sheep into the best pasturage, for He gives them for their spiritual nourishment—as a light and a lamp on their path of life: as their rule of conduct—His holy Word, the word of truth which He brought down from heaven, and which He taught for three long years in the land of the Jews, and He goes before them in the path of life, to give them an example as to how they should observe His word. He says, therefore: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; they that follow me, walk not in darkness, but they will have the light of life." And what shall I tell you of the Church which He founded, of the holy Sacraments which He instituted in her, of the Holy Ghost who descended upon her, so that He might remain with us always until the end of the world? And what shall I say of the graces and benefits which He gives to each one of us who have the happiness of belonging to His Church? I have said enough, and I doubt not that all will unanimously confess that Christ is the good shepherd. But, my dear Christians, *are we able to say that we are the good sheep of Christ?*

2. A good sheep stays with the flock, obeys the voice of the shepherd, and does not require urging. Now I ask you, dear Christian, do you belong to the flock of Jesus Christ, that is to say, to those who believe firmly everything which His holy Church places before us to be believed, or do you doubt one or other of those truths, and associate willingly with those who ridicule the truths, laws and customs of the faith? Do you listen to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, when He warns you by the voice of your conscience, or by a sermon, or a good friend, when He calls you away from the company of wicked men, when he admonishes you to do penance and to be converted? Do you obey His commandments cheerfully, or is it necessary to drive you to this by suffering and tribulations? Ah, dear Christian, how can you say that you are one of Christ's good sheep when you offend your Good Shepherd daily? How can you be a good sheep when you despise His voice, cast His exhortations to the winds, transgress His commandments with levity, and have no desire to hear anything about penance and conversion? Tell me, can you say: I know my shepherd? Proud one, who is your shepherd and guide? Christ or the devil? Whom do you serve, you avaricious man, you miser, Christ or Mammon? Who is your god, you who indulge in every excess, Christ or your belly? And you, who are given to impurity, which shepherd do you obey, Christ or your unbridled desires and passions? Can you say with Peter: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death." (Luke xxii. 33.)

Alas, you are so weak that you can not sometimes bear the least suffering with patience for the love of Christ. How would it be if you had to go to prison and to death? Oh, what ingratitude! Christ shed His blood for you and gave His life, and you will not bear the slightest neglect for love of Him, or give an alms to the poor! Shall I continue to give you proofs that you do not yet bear the qualities of a good sheep of Christ?

You must admit, dear Christian, that you are not yet a good sheep of Christ, the Good Shepherd! But do not let this acknowledgment be sufficient, but endeavor to become in the future that which you are not now! Listen gladly to the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, obey His commandments, that you may not find yourself at the last judgment placed on the left hand with the goats, but be

placed at the right hand with the good sheep of Christ, to whom He will then say: "Enter into the joy of your Lord and Shepherd!" Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

"You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice."—John xvi. 20.

An old proverb says: "Many heads, many minds." And so it is. One thinks this, and the other thinks that; one is merry and cheerful, the other quiet and sad. The heathen sage Democritus was always laughing, Heraclitus forever crying. The same difference existed between Babylon and Jerusalem. The inhabitants of Babylon were at all times inclined to jest and make merry, and they invite the children of the world to do likewise, saying: "Come therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered: let us everywhere leave tokens of joy." (Wis. ii. 6.) But Jerusalem, the Holy City, put on penitential garb, and said: "Come, let us weep before the Lord that made us." (Ps. xciv. 6.) To which do you adhere, dear Christians, to Babylon or to Jerusalem? Christ says: "Blessed are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh. Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep." (Luke vi. 21, 25.) And in to-day's Gospel: "You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice." It is better, then, to mourn over our sins in this world, for our sadness shall be changed into joy. But he who thinks that he has not sinned, and is therefore not obliged to mourn, only deceives himself, and when any one laughs and is joyful over his sins he only deceives the world, for *a bad conscience is the greatest torment,* although it may not be outwardly apparent. We will speak on this subject to-day.

All is not gold that glitters. Many a one appears in good humor and laughing when it is only known to God how they really feel. St. Augustine says: "Of all human suffering there is none greater than the torture of a bad conscience." If those present who have grievously sinned wanted to make known the state of their soul they would be obliged to acknowledge that the worm that gnaws was ever present within them, and that they were strangers to peace and contentment. This was Cain's experience after having slain his

brother Abel, and when God rebuked him for his crime he said: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon; behold, thou dost cast me out this day from the face of the earth: every one, therefore, that findeth me shall kill me." (Gen. iv. 13, 14.) Why was Cain afraid? There was no one else upon earth but his parents and brethren! He knew perfectly well that they would not kill him. His bad conscience occasioned him this great torment, which drove him here and there and filled him with fear and anxiety. And David, too, experienced how bad it is when our conscience accuses us of a crime. When Bethsabee sent word to him that, on account of the adultery she had committed with him, she had reason to fear the return of her husband, Urias, David, harassed with remorse of conscience, and fearing that Urias might expose him to public shame, arranged that Urias should be placed in the front ranks of battle and killed. St. Chrysostom expresses his surprise at this. What, he asks, was not David a mighty king, a hero, who did not even fear the powerful giant Goliath, and now he is afraid of a common soldier? His bad conscience, answers the Saint, caused him this fear and anxiety. He feared that his crime would become known; therefore, he did not rest until the just Urias met his death. If time allowed I could give you many such examples by which you may observe that a bad conscience never gives man any rest; but I need only appeal to your own experience. Were you not, when tempted to the sin of impurity or to any other sin, afraid that others might know about it? Or, if happily such a great evil has not befallen you, have you not often felt remorse of conscience for lesser sins, and thereby become restless and troubled? Have you not heard that a thief often betrays himself by the fear and anxiety which reveal themselves in his looks and manners? A bad conscience gives no peace to man; if any one with a bad conscience is at peace and joyful, it is a sign that his conscience is asleep, and that he is utterly obdurate and hardened in his sins. He is like a man lying mortally sick with fever. The doctor asks the patient where he feels the most pain; he answers that he does not feel any particular pain, only he is exhausted and weak and is consumed with a great thirst. The doctor considers his condition very critical, and turning to the relations he says: "This absence of pain in such condition is a bad sign, and it shows that his illness has taken the upper hand; give him whatever he asks for, drugs are useless, he cannot live." The sinner finds himself in just such a pitiable condition. He does not feel the deadly

poison of sin any longer in his conscience; he lives on without reflection, frivolous and indifferent, as if there were no God, no judgment, no hell, no heaven. He hears descriptions of how the damned are tortured in hell, but he pays no attention to them. God afflicts him with crosses and sufferings, so as to lead him to do penance, but he will not recognize that which is meant for his salvation. Those who have the care of souls and good friends admonish him to do penance and lead a better life; meanwhile he throws everything to the winds, lives on quietly, and sells his soul and his eternal happiness for a momentary sinful desire. As Esau once sold his birthright for a mess of lentil pottage, so are these blind and hardened sinners who give away their birthright, which is heaven, for money or a beautiful dress, or a drink, or flattery, and often for much less. St. Jerome says if a sinner is quiet and at rest, it is like the peace and calm which precedes a bad storm. "The wicked man, when he is come into the depths of sin, contemneth: but ignominy and reproach follow him" (Prov. xviii. 3), and I add to this: eternal perdition.

What better can we do, dear Christians, than to preserve a good conscience always, and to mourn our sins, by which we have offended God? If we have sinned, we know that we shall only be forgiven when we have repented; also that we can only recover peace of conscience when we are reconciled to God by receiving the Sacrament of Penance. But if there should be one amongst you who, in spite of his many sins, is at peace, let him understand that he is in the greatest possible danger of dying an eternal death, let him no longer harden his heart, but hear to-day the voice of God, which calls him to repentance! Let us lament and be sorry for our own and for the sins of others, that our sadness may one day be changed into joy! Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

"I go to him that sent me."—John xvi. 5.

SYNOPSIS.—The reproof to the Apostles, "None of you asketh me: Whither goest thou?" applied to us. Our friends die, and we do not ask where they go. No thought given to the great journey into eternity. The souls of the just and the souls of the ungodly. Our most important business preparation for the eternity. The step from time into eternity sudden and irrevocable. Great efforts for timely gain but none for eternity. The evil spirit tempting us to enjoy the pleasures of the world, thus ensnaring the soul. Our journey into eternity began the moment we were born. Exhortation.

Although the Apostles had good cause to ask for further information when their dear Master spoke to them of His departure to the Father, instead of that they gave themselves up to sadness. They rightly deserved the reproof, therefore, which the Saviour gave them in these words: "I go now to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me: Whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart." That reproof which Christ gave to the Apostles may very suitably be applied to all of us. We see dear parents, brothers, sisters, relations, and acquaintances leave this world by death; thereupon we mourn and complain, but very few ask themselves: "Whither goest thou—to heaven or to hell?" When we undertake a long journey we make inquiries as to the route to be taken, and we provide ourselves with everything that will be necessary for the journey; but of the great journey to eternity, of that we do not think, for that we make no preparations. When we have started on a journey, and then remember on the way that we have forgotten something, we may turn back to fetch it; but when in death we have started upon the journey to eternity we can not turn back to do that which we have left undone. It is therefore advisable *to prepare ourselves for the great impending journey,* while we have time to ask, "*Whither goest thou?*" Of this we will speak to-day.

To the question, "Whither goest thou?" the wise Sirach replies, "Into the house of eternity." The souls of the just go into a blessed eternity, the souls of the ungodly into a wretched eternity. The most important business which we have upon earth consists, therefore, in this: take care that at our death we shall enter into the house of a blessed eternity. When a person intends to walk

upon the ice he does not jump upon it with both feet at once, but he examines carefully with one foot, the other one remaining on the firm ground, to see if the ice is firm and strong enough. If he finds that it cracks and sinks he withdraws his foot quickly and does not venture upon it, so as not to fall into the water and be drowned. It would be a very good thing, dear Christians, if we could in this wise make a trial of eternity; if we, standing with one foot in time, could with the other one inquire into the country of eternity, and then be able to withdraw if it should so happen that we found ourselves falling into the abyss of hell. But this can not be done. From time into eternity is only a step which we must take very suddenly, no matter how much we may resist it. This step can never be undone when it becomes apparent that instead of going to heaven we must go to hell or purgatory. Those who in temporal matters have made an unfortunate choice—have married unhappily, for instance—complain and lament indeed; at the same time they have the hope that death will release them from their misery. But those who, after death, enter the house of a miserable eternity have no more hope of ever leaving there, for the pains of hell are eternal and there is no release from them.

We know this, dear Christians, and yet there are so many persons who think of everything else rather than of that inevitable and difficult journey into eternity, and they are more anxious about things which they can not take with them upon this journey than about those which will be the foundation of the salvation of their immortal souls in eternity. Ah, how many of us are attached with our whole hearts to vain and transitory goods, honors, and pleasures of this world, and busy ourselves from early morning till late at night in our anxiety to acquire them! And yet they are not able to afford our souls a temporal, much less an everlasting happiness! When the hunter shows a hare to his dog, the dog runs after it and strives with all his might to catch it. After he catches it his master makes him give it up, often beating him, and the dog has nothing for his trouble but blows. And thus it is with many souls. The evil spirit shows them, for instance, an advantage or a profit that they can gain if they will only take the pains. This happens to many avaricious and miserly people. They think and plan day and night; they labor in the sweat of their brow; work till they are bent and stiff, like a poor animal, just to earn a few dollars; and when, after years of toil, they become rich,

and they are congratulating themselves upon their wealth, like the rich man in the Gospel, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer" (Luke xii. 19), then death comes suddenly, takes away their wealth and their life, and conducts their poor soul into the land of a wretched eternity, and the words of Scripture are fulfilled: "When a man shall be made rich, and when the glory of his house shall be increased, when he shall die he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him." (Ps. xlviii.) To another one the evil spirit shows the sensual pleasures of this world and urges him to enjoy them. The man, blinded, obeys this impulse and enjoys them as much as he possibly can. Then when the devil has caught him in his net he prepares all kinds of torments and sufferings for him, and his end frequently is perdition. And so it is with everything which the world offers us: nothing makes us permanently happy; everything leaves a sharp thorn behind it in our conscience, and only too often eternal damnation is the reward for all the pains and trouble we have expended in chasing the phantom of happiness.

We should for this reason frequently ask ourselves the question, "Whither goest thou—to hell or to heaven?" and according to what the answer is we should forsake the broad road and return to the narrow path of virtue, which leads to eternal life. If on the journey to eternity, which we began on the day of our birth, we desire to reach our goal happily, we must appropriate in time that which alone we can take with us into eternity, and which alone has any value and worth, namely, virtue and merit. Everything which we accumulate here, all our possessions, gold and silver, jewels and costly garments, honors and dignities, we must forsake by death, and only our works will accompany us into eternity; the good ones will obtain for us the reward of heaven, the bad ones will take us to hell.

Let us then be careful that we may not be lost eternally! Let us, as often as one of our relations or neighbors pass away, put this question to ourselves, "If death had come to me, should I have gone to heaven or to hell?" and then let us so live as we would wish to have lived when the hour of our death arrives. In this way we shall be able to say at that last hour: "I go to him that sent me; I am going now to my Heavenly Father." Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

"Amen, amen I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in my name he will give it you."—John xvi. 23.

SYNOPSIS.—Men, for the greater part, think only of their own advantage, and would rather receive than give. God likes to give rather than to receive. "If you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you." The feast of the Ascension near, and a befitting occasion to place our needs in the hands of Jesus, that He may take them up to heaven and place them before the Father. God our Father. So Jesus taught us to address God. In the Old Testament the divine laws were calculated to inspire fear, in the new law God desires to inspire love. The heavenly Father forgives the penitent sinner. Be good and obedient children to so good a Father.

Though I, for my part, do not dispute the truth of the sentence of St. Paul, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35), I doubt whether every one in this congregation agrees with the Apostle. Daily experience at least teaches us that the greater part of men think only of their own advantage, and that they would rather receive money than give any away. Even those whom the Lord has blessed with abundant earthly possessions are pleased and happy when they receive money, and they consider themselves impoverished if they have to contribute their mite to a good cause. But with God it is different; He likes to give rather than to receive; "For the same is Lord over all, rich to all that call upon him." (Rom. x. 12.) And in to-day's Gospel the Saviour promises, "Verily, verily, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."

Dear Christians, the feast of the Ascension of Christ is close at hand, and during the three next days let us place our prayers, desires, and necessities with confidence in His hands, that He may take them with Him to His heavenly Father, with whom He is our mediator and advocate, to obtain grace and salvation for us. We may confidently expect this, for *God is our Father.* How greatly this truth is calculated to inspire us with confidence I will point out to you to-day.

When we desire to obtain something from a prince or high official in this world it makes all the difference whether we give them their right title or not. When this is neglected it not infrequently happens that the petition is thrown aside and remains unnoticed. With God, who is the Lord of heaven and earth, we

have nothing of the kind to fear, because His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ Himself, has prescribed the words of the petition which we are to present to His Heavenly Father, and He has given us the right title by which we should address Him when He teaches us to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven," etc. The name of "Father" is a sweet word, full of consolation. "When we call God 'father,'" says St. Anastatius, "we have already expressed by this word that we expect the forgiveness of our sins, the turning away of the punishment merited, justice, sanctification, redemption, and to be adopted among His children. He who calls God 'father' represents to Him that Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son, is our brother, and that consequently we may become partakers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost." What can give us more strength than the address "Our Father?" "This address," says St. Augustine, "arouses the love of the Father and causes our petitions to be heard, for what could He refuse to His children, who has made us to be His children?" "And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he reach him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask him." (Luke xi. 11.) All the laws of God in the Old Testament were directed toward inspiring people of Israel with fear, but in the new law God desires to be loved as a good Father. For this reason His only begotten Son says: "You, therefore, shall pray in this manner: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!" (Matt. vi. 9) and the Church reminds us of this at every Mass in the words: "Instructed by Thy saving precepts, and following Thy divine institution, we presume to say, Our Father," etc. It is then no audacity for us to call God "father," and we may confidently expect that we shall be heard. Even if we have sinned, and displeased and offended our good Father, and merited punishment, we must not despair, but trust in His love and mercy. When the prodigal son had squandered his inheritance among strangers, and was reduced to such a miserable condition that he appeased his hunger out of the swine's trough, he said to himself, "If I return home and call my father by the endearing name of 'father,' he will forgive me. I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned,' and his anger will be turned into love." And so will

the Heavenly Father forgive us and take us again into favor, if we only make the firm resolution, with contrite and humble hearts, that we will do better, if we turn to Him and say, "Father, I have sinned, and I am not worthy to be called Thy child, but reject me not, but forgive me out of the abundance of Thy love and mercy!" With one word we may confidently turn to God, our good "father," in all our sufferings and afflictions, in all our necessities and troubles, no matter what they may be, and He will be sure to help us. And when the knowledge of the guilt of our sins causes us to lose courage, and we are afraid of being spurned, let us think of His word, "Call to me: Thou are my father" (Jere. iii. 4), and say, "My Father, I am not worthy to obtain Thy grace and help, because I have forgotten Thee; but Thou hast not forgotten me, and Thou lovest me, though I am a disobedient child. For the sake of Thy love, give me for soul and body that which is wholesome and salutary! O Father in heaven, have mercy upon me!"

But should you desire to be sure that your prayers will always be heard, take care to be always good and obedient children of your Heavenly Father. The Jews used to be proud of being the children of Abraham, but Christ put them to shame when He said: "If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham!" (John vii. 39.) And I can say the same to you, "If you are the children of God, do those things which God has prescribed for you to do. Believe in Him, love Him, honor Him, obey Him, keep His commandments! Christ, the Son of God, could say: "I do always the things that please him" (John viii. 29), "I honor my Father" (v. 49), "And as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I." (John xiv. 31.) Would to God that we could say this, and that we had not given God occasion by our bad behavior, by our sins and vices, to complain of us as He did of the people of Israel, "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me." (Is. i. 2.), or to reproach us, "If then I be a father, where is my honor?" (Mal. i. 6.) Oh, let us take care for the future. I conclude, with Augustine, "that we may no longer be unworthy children of such a Father! Let us walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ! Let us honor and love our Father, and keep His commandments! Then we may go to Him" with confidence in all our necessities and wants. He will not let us implore in vain, but will make us partake abundantly of His grace and blessing. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

"These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized."—John xvi. 1.

SYNOPSIS.—As we point out to a friend setting out for a journey the perils he will encounter, so Christ warned His Apostles of the fate that would befall them in following His footsteps. These words also meant for us. The meaning of "scandalize." Scandal-giving and scandal-taking; the difference. How we are guilty of scandal-taking.

When some one is about to undertake a long and dangerous journey by land or water we recommend him to take precautions, and we warn him of the perils to which he may be exposed. This is what God did when, through Moses, He led His chosen people out of Egypt. He gave them certain instructions as to how they should behave themselves in the different encampments, and told him not to permit the people of Israel to enter into an alliance with the inhabitants of the land of Caanan, so that they might not fall away from the true faith and be seduced into worshiping false gods. Christ also told His Apostles, before He sent them out into the world to preach His gospel to mankind, what would befall them: "They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth a service to God." But they must not be confounded or scandalized at all this because He, their Lord and Master, had not fared any better. "These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized." What the Saviour then said to His Apostles is said also to us; for all those who wish to live justly and piously in this world must hold themselves in readiness to suffer persecution and contradictions. No matter what may happen, *we must not be scandalized,* as I will proceed to show you.

The troubled sea of this world abounds with many dangerous rocks, upon which the little ships of many Christian souls strike, and are wrecked and lost. Not the least of these rocks are the scandals of which our Saviour warns us in such a fatherly manner in to-day's Gospel. There is *a difference in scandal, a scandal that is given and a scandal that is taken.* To scandalize by *giving* scandal means to tempt some one into sin by word or deed. If a father or mother curses and lies, slanders or blasphemes, makes use of unchaste words and improper songs, they then give their children and neighbors

scandal; that is to say, they induce their children and neighbors to follow their example, to curse and lie, to slander and blaspheme, to use improper words and songs. What a grievous sin this sort of scandal is we may understand by the words of Christ, which say: "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. xviii. 6.) But of this scandal-giving the Saviour does not speak in to-day's Gospel, but of scandal-*taking*. We take scandal when we are induced, by the doings and sayings of our fellow men, to indulge in sinful thoughts, judgments, conversations, and actions. This taking of scandal is just as common as to give scandal, and I should not find time in these few moments to enumerate all different ways in which we can take scandal. The greater part of men take scandal either *at the wicked lives of their fellow creatures* or *at the apparent happiness of the ungodly*.

I do not believe that I shall be mistaken if I suppose that one or other in this congregation has thought or said, again and again: "This or that one is a drunkard, is unchaste, or a miser, or proud, or given to some other sin. Why should I be blamed or punished if I am guilty of the same faults?" The bad example of his fellow man is a scandal and an occasion of sin to him. But tell me, my dear Christians, whom should we imitate in our thoughts and actions, words and deeds—the words and examples of wicked men or the teaching and example of Jesus Christ? And if you all make answer, "the teaching and example of Jesus Christ," what do you suppose will be the punishment of those who allude to their fellow men, and thereby excuse their sins and excesses, by saying, "Others talk and behave like this"? Not at all; for not the conduct of wicked men, but the commandments of God must be the standard toward which we must aim. There are vermin who dwell only in dirt and filth. You resemble these if you occupy yourself always with the sins, faults and omissions of your fellow men. If you must busy yourself with the doings and sayings of others, at least do as the bees do: they do not extract the poison but the honey from the swamp plants. Pay no attention to the sins and failings of your fellow men, so as to take scandal, but rather observe their virtues and their talents, that you may imitate them. "When you behold a fault in your fellow man," says St. Bernard, "examine and see whether you have not the same yourself, and then do better; if you observe

anything good or praiseworthy in him which you do not possess, then learn it of him." This is in accordance with Christian charity and reason.

Many complain that the ungodly lead a happy life, at least as far as appearances are concerned, while the just and the upright have to endure so many persecutions and contradictions. This was remarked by the prophet Jeremias, and he asks: "Why doth the way of the wicked prosper? Why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly?" (xii. 1.) And King David complains: "Because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners. They are not in the labor of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men. Behold, these are sinners, and yet abounding in the world they have obtained riches. And I said: Then have I in vain justified my heart, and washed my hands among the innocent." (Ps. lxxii. 3.) But, dear Christians, do not mind if you see the just oppressed and persecuted, while many a sinner has everything in abundance! Do not be scandalized, and do not think: "There is no God, as otherwise He would not permit this." Remind yourselves of those words of Christ, "These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized," when you are hated, persecuted and oppressed, for it is a disposition of God that, "All who will live piously in Jesus Christ shall suffer persecution" (II. Tim. iii. 12). Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself, had to experience this, for through His cross and Passion He entered into His glory. We, who are His disciples and servants, must not expect a better lot, for the disciple is not greater than the master, nor the servant than his lord. This should be our consolation when we have to suffer unjustly, while all goes well with the ungodly. Our sufferings will only last as short a while as their happiness, for after this short earthly life comes the judgment, when every one will be rewarded for according to his work. At that moment the ungodly will have to pay dearly for the short term of happiness they enjoyed upon earth. Let us then never be scandalized, neither at the bad examples nor at the apparent happiness of the ungodly, but let us do and act according to the commandments of God, and endure all our sufferings and tribulations patiently, in the hope that then our reward will be great before the Lord! Amen.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

"But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you."—John xiv. 26.

SYNOPSIS.—The Holy Ghost came upon the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues. The meaning of this.

I. The wicked ways of the world since the fall of Adam. Even the Jewish people infected. The form of fiery tongues indicated that the Apostles were to proclaim the Gospel to the wicked world with tongues purified by fire, and also to kindle the fire of the love of God in the whole world. This fire spread with irresistible force, and we owe to the Holy Ghost the great good fortune of being called to the Christian faith.

II. The evils of a bad tongue. The Holy Ghost came not only to fortify the heart, but also to reform the tongue. Sinful speech. Slander. The believers in Christ to speak with new tongues.

We celebrate in the great feast of to-day the commemoration of the descent of the Holy Ghost, whom Christ had promised to His Apostles and to all those who believed in Him. "And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in the same place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming: and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire: and it sat upon every one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts ii. 1-4.) The Holy Ghost came, therefore, in the form of fiery tongues upon the Apostles, and we may ask, Why did this happen? This question I will answer for you to-day.

1. The world was steeped in wickedness since the fall of our first parents; they all had gone astray, like sheep who have no shepherd. With the exception of the Jewish people, all the nations had fallen away from the true God and worshiped idols. In place of the Creator they had substituted creatures, even images, which they had made with their own hands out of wood, stone, and metal, and to these they paid divine honors. The result was that sin and vice were common, but virtue very scarce. Even the Jewish people became infected with the general wickedness, and the Saviour found among this favored people of God only envy and opposition. He was blasphemed and persecuted, and died, a victim of their malice, upon the cross. The Saviour sent His Apostles into this ungodly and ruined world with the commission to bring men back to God

by proclaiming His teaching and by the administration of His means of grace, and promised to send the Holy Ghost to them on the feast of Pentecost, that they might, through Him, be enabled to accomplish the great task of the salvation of men. But the Holy Ghost came down upon them in the form of fiery tongues, to indicate to them, on the one hand, that they must proclaim the teaching of Christ with tongues purified by fire, and thereby to enlighten the darkness of heathendom, and, on the other hand, that they should kindle the fire of the love of God in the whole world, and cleanse it from all sin and impurity. This is what the royal prophet David meant when he said: "Thou makest thy ministers a burning fire: thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth." (Ps. ciii. 4, 30.) Yes, the fire which the Holy Ghost kindled by the tongues of the Apostles and their successors in all parts of the world was so strong that neither the powers of hell nor the cunning and malice of men could extinguish it: it seized hold of everything with irresistible force, spread itself all over the world, cleansed and purified the people, and renewed the face of the earth. And we, my dear Christians, without any merit of ours, walk in the light of the Gospel, and rejoice in the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. O may the fire of divine love which the Holy Ghost pours into our hearts burn and consume every unholy and godless creature, and incite us to flee from sin and to practise virtue.

2. The Holy Ghost came also down upon the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues, to point out that He wished to renew the tongues of men, so that for the future they might not talk of wickedness, but only of that which was good. How necessary it is that the tongues of men should be renewed is best known to those who, at some time or other, have lost the peace and quiet of their conscience, and their honor and good name, on account of a bad tongue. St. James, speaking of a bad tongue, which can propagate so much misery, says (iii. 6) that the tongue is a fire which is lighted in hell. "But the tongue," says St. Bernard, "which dissolves married love, disturbs the peace of families, and brings about dissensions and quarrels, is set on fire in hell; the tongue is lighted in hell which utters nothing but unchaste and sinful words, for the fire which comes from above is chaste and peacemaking." Before the descent of the Holy Ghost the human tongue was in a bad way; the heart of man was, as we have already heard, ruined and wicked, and as the heart so was the tongue, for out of the fulness of the heart the

mouth speaks. But the Holy Ghost had mercy upon the fallen and sin-entangled race. He came down not only to renew the heart, but also the tongue, and to teach us only to speak of that which is good, honorable, holy, and beseeming, and directed to the praises of God. We may see what a good teacher the Holy Ghost is in the first Christians, who spoke incessantly of the great works of God; they praised and magnified God—grievous sin was not so much as mentioned among them.

But how is it now with the tongues of Christians? Have they learned to converse of the Holy Ghost as is fitting that Christians should do? Are their tongues no longer set on fire in hell, but with that fire which Christ brought into the world and the Holy Ghost enkindles in the heart of every man? Ah, may God have mercy on us! Numberless Christians still speak like the heathens; that is to say, they make use of their tongues for lying, unchaste, blasphemous, uncharitable, and sinful conversations, and it would seem as if they had never learned in the school of the Holy Ghost. Go into any company and inquire what sort of conversation they are indulging in? When the Saviour put this question to the disciples who were going to Emmaus, He received for answer, that they were talking about Jesus of Nazareth. Do you imagine that your people would answer your question in this way? When people meet they talk, for the most part, about the weather, the price of provisions, of dresses and millinery, of the faults and shortcomings of their neighbors, of a thousand other vain and sinful things, but they do not speak of God, of Christ, and of heavenly things! And who can measure the harm which is also caused by wicked tongues? Who can depict the sufferings of those who have lost their good name and reputation and the peace of their conscience by such a poisonous tongue?

Dear Christians, the Saviour foretold that the believers in Christ would speak with new tongues (Mark xvi. 17); which means, as St. Gregory says, they will no longer speak of sinful but of good and spiritual things. Let us endeavor that this prophecy may be fulfilled in us! Let us from now on speak a new language. Formerly we sullied our conscience by our speech, we annoyed our neighbors, and offended God; we will sin no more with our tongue, we will speak chastely and honorably of that which is good and befitting, for the edification of our neighbor and the honor of God. May the Holy Ghost assist us with His grace! Amen.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—Matt. xxviii. 19.

SYNOPSIS.—On Pentecost we remembered a miracle that made the Apostles eloquent, to-day we commemorate a mystery that puts to silence even the greatest theologians. Instead of pondering over this mystery, let us consider what we owe to the Most Holy Trinity. Tobias and the angel. What can we offer God? St. Peter and the fish. Jonas. St. Augustine. Let us be grateful for God's blessings.

According to St. Luke the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost upon the Apostles and the faithful there assembled in the form of fiery tongues, and they began to speak in different languages and to proclaim the great works of God. To-day the feast of the Most Holy Trinity reminds us of the contrasting fact that even the theologians, inspired by the Holy Ghost, confess they must be silent on the great mystery of this feast, as they can neither fathom it nor comprehend it. "You may," says St. Ambrose, "for instance, praise the Most Holy Trinity, but you can not explain its mystery in words." We, too, will follow this advice, dear Christians; instead of pondering over this great mystery, we will learn

How we ought to praise and give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity.

We see every day how the sun that rises in the morning and sets in the evening shines upon and illumines everything with its rays. Let us in the same way observe every day the countless blessings which the infinite goodness of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost lavishes upon us day by day, and let us return befitting thanks for them. When the young Tobias returned from his journey to Media and related to his old father not only the great peril from which he had escaped through the advice and assistance of his traveling companion, the Angel Raphael, but also of the many kindnesses which this heavenly guide had shown him, the latter put this question to his son: "What can we give to this holy man, who came with thee?" The young Tobias thought this over, and answered: "Father, what wages shall we give him? or what can be equal to his services? He conducted me and brought me back safe; he obtained the money from Gabelus; he helped me to gain a wife; he expelled from her the evil spirit, and thus gave joy to her parents; he delivered me from being devoured by the fish; thee he hath made

to see the light of day; and all of us are filled with good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for these things? But I beseech thee, my father, to desire him, that he would vouchsafe to accept of one half of all things that have been brought." (Tob. xii. 1-4.) Thereupon they called him aside and begged that he would vouchsafe to accept the half of what had been brought, but he declined, making himself known as an angel of God, and said: "Bless ye the God of heaven: give glory to him in the sight of all that live; because he hath shown his mercy to you."

With greater cause may we ask the Most Holy Trinity on the great feast of to-day: what return may we and ought we to make to the three divine Persons, or with what should we adequately repay the benefits which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost bestow upon us so abundantly? The Father has created us, the Son has redeemed us, the Holy Ghost has sanctified us. We have to thank the Most Holy Trinity for the many physical and spiritual faculties and abilities which we possess for the grace that we are members of the true Church of Jesus Christ; that therein we receive the forgiveness of our sins, grace to do good, assistance to combat the enemy of our salvation, consolation in affliction, and peace of conscience; that we are provided with our daily food, shelter, and clothing, and so many other things. How may we and ought we to repay? God does not require our temporal goods, for "the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." (Ps. xlix. 12.) What, then, should we do? "Bless ye the God of heaven, give glory to him in the sight of all that live because he hath shown his mercy to you."

Yes, we will praise and extol the Most Holy Trinity, and thank God with all our hearts for the blessings which we daily receive in such abundance. We will offer to God daily a sacrifice of praise, as David did. (Ps. xlix. 13.) But as the praise which proceeds from the mouth of a sinner can not be pleasing to Him, we will first repent of our sins and strive to acquire righteousness. When on a certain occasion the Apostle Peter had to pay the tribute, or the poll-tax, and he had no money, His Master said to him: "Go thou to the sea, and cast in a hook, and that fish which shall first come up, take: and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater: take that, and give it to them for me and thee." (Matt. xvii. 26.) We all, my dear Christians, are debtors to the infinite goodness of God, the king of heaven and earth. That we may pay the tribute that we owe, let each one seek the money in his mouth,

upon his tongue, and in his heart. I know not what kind of coin St. Peter found in the fish's mouth, but the coin which we should have in our mouth, upon our tongue, and in our heart, with which to pay God the interest that we owe Him, that I know: it is thanksgiving which we should unceasingly offer to God with our lips and with our heart. Let us return thanks to the Father as our Creator, to the Son as our Redeemer, and to the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier. If we do not neglect this, we shall partake of a rich blessing. We see this, for example, in Jonas, who, after being three days in the whale as a punishment for his disobedience, was thrown upon the land again. St. Augustine writes of this event that Jonas while in the whale praised God, and gave thanks for his affliction, and he adds: "Whosoever is resigned with a pious heart to the three divine persons, will escape every evil and find every good." But, on the other hand, *those* who daily enjoy the benefits of God without returning thanks to Him can only expect punishment, for "the hope of the unthankful shall melt away as the winter's ice, and shall run off as unprofitable water." (Wis. xvi. 29.) Oh, how many ungrateful children there are upon this earth! How many are there who sit down to table daily, eat and drink and make merry, without saying one "Our Father" in thanksgiving for all these blessings. How many others are there who even abuse God's blessings, to the ruination of their body and soul, and to offend God! We will no longer belong to the number of these ungrateful ones! We will praise and extol God daily, whether He sends us joy or sorrow! We will thank Him for all things and never permit our confidence in Him to waver! The purer our heart is with which we daily offer to God our Lord a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving the greater is our hope that we shall one day unite with the heavenly hosts in the hymn of praise and thanksgiving: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come!" (Apoc. iv. 8.) Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many."—Luke xiv. 16.

SYNOPSIS.—The Holy Eucharist the salvation of the just, but a cause of damnation for those who receive the same unworthily. Jesus still the same Redeemer who cured and saved all those approaching Him in sincerity and penitence, the same as He did when on earth. St. Chrysostom. St. Thomas Aquinas. We must clean ourselves of sin before partaking of Our Lord. Jesus washing the feet of the Apostles before giving them His flesh and blood. Josias. Azias. Destroy your idols and purify your hearts.

By the great supper, which is the subject of to-day's Gospel, many of the Fathers of the Church understand the eternal blessedness, to which God has called all men, and they say that if all men do not participate in eternal bliss it will not be the fault of God, but of men themselves. Others (St. Cyril, for example) compare the parable in to-day's Gospel to the Holy Eucharist. As a matter of fact this Sacrament is a great supper, to which Christ invites every one and in which He gives them for food and drink His most holy flesh and blood. But because through their own fault many of those invited were not present at that supper, therefore

The supper which Christ has prepared in the Most Holy Eucharist does not bring salvation and bliss to all,

as I will show you further to-day.

When I say to you that the participation of the Holy Eucharist does not bring salvation to all, you may ask, how is this? Has Jesus, who now reigns gloriously in heaven, no longer the power that He possessed when, despised by the Jews, He walked upon this earth in His mortal body? He converted Magdalen, the notorious sinner, by His preaching, and enkindled in her heart such a powerful fire of love that she renounced all vanity and sensuality. When Peter denied Him, He only looked at him, and this look was sufficient to draw tears of penance from the Apostle's eyes. The woman suffering from an issue of blood was cured by her touching the hem of His garment. The blind saw, the sick were cured, the lepers cleansed by a single word from His lips. But now, when this same Jesus speaks to us so often, moves us so often by His grace, so frequently visits us in the Holy Eucharist, our soul remains as sick and blind and covered with the leprosy of sin as it was before. Has then this divine sun lost the light, this

expert physician His art, the powerful God His omnipotence? Not in the least, answers St. Chrysostom, and he explains this by a beautiful example, saying: "In the same way that material food, no matter how good, costly, and wholesome it may be, can not help a body full of bad humors, but, on the contrary, injures it, so does the reception of the Holy Eucharist by a soul laden with sins bring about its damnation, and not its salvation." And St. Thomas of Aquinas says: "The Blessed Sacrament brings either life or death, life to those who receive it with pure hearts, death to those who approach it with impenitent and hardened hearts. Whosoever, therefore, desires to receive from the Saviour present in the Holy Eucharist, grace and peace, fortitude and strength, life and immortality, must approach the holy table with a heart well prepared."

It is said that certain animals wash themselves every time before they eat. This is what we should do when we desire to partake of the Bread of Angels in Holy Communion; we should wash ourselves of all sin and uncleanliness. The Saviour Himself taught us this at the institution of this Most Holy Sacrament. When He took His disciples to Mount Thabor to show them His glory and majesty He did not wash their feet, but when He was about to give them His flesh and blood then He washed their feet, to signify that even a greater purity is necessary for the participation of this Holy Sacrament than for the vision of the glory of Christ. It is known that among all the Jewish kings none was so God-fearing and so much according to God's own heart as David, and none so wise as Solomon, and yet the Holy Ghost bestows greatest praise not on them, but on King Josias: "There was no king before him like unto him that returned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, according to all the laws of Moses, neither after him did there arise any like him." (4 Kings xxiii. 25.) And why? Because before celebrating the Paschal feast with his people he had the Temple cleaned, he threw out the idols which he found there, killed their priests, decorated the Temple and reinstated the worship of the one true God. No other had done this, and therefore the Holy Ghost gives him this praise: "There was no king before him like unto him, neither after him did there arise any like him."

And this is what we should do, my dear Christians, when we go to the table of the Lord: we should purify our hearts from the

soot of sin, we should adorn the temple of our souls with the various virtues, and above all things cast out the idols of evil desires and habits. For what does it avail us to bend the knee before the Almighty and to pretend the greatest reverence, and immediately afterward be a slave to lust? To what purpose do we approach the banquet of love and make peace with our neighbor and then immediately afterward be at enmity with one another, hate and persecute one another? We thereby only increase our guilt and are more culpable before the Lord. "How much more, do you think, he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath esteemed the blood of the Testament unclean?" (Heb. x. 29.) When the Israelites brought the ark of the covenant from the house of Aminadab, and Ozias saw that the wagon upon which it rested was dropping to one side, he stepped up to it and held the ark of the covenant firmly, that it might not fall from the wagon. Thereupon he was punished by instant death, because he had dared to lay hands on the ark of the covenant. If, then, God punished Ozias so severely, who touched the ark of the covenant, which was a symbol of the Holy Eucharist, how angry He will be, and how severely He will punish us, if we receive the Most Holy Eucharist, in which He is truly present, with lips and heart impure and unclean. Therefore the Apostle exhorts us fervently: "But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." (I. Cor. 28, 29.) Examine yourself earnestly, dear Christians, before approaching Holy Communion. Examine and see if you have not erected an idol in your heart. Dost thou know, O sinner, what idols thou dost worship? Thy idol, O miser, is thy wealth, thy money, and thy goods! Thy idol, O unchaste soul, is thy lustful flesh; thy idol, O drunkard, is thy craving for drink. Each sin and sinful habit is an idol. Cast these idols out of thy heart, otherwise thou art not worthy to receive the Holy Eucharist. It will not bring thee salvation, but damnation. Purify your heart and adorn it with the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, with humility and a desire for this heavenly food. If you approach the table of the Lord with such a preparation, you will then partake of His grace and of His peace. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."—Luke xv. 2.

SYNOPSIS.—Our Lord ever ready to receive a penitent and contrite heart. His mercy even demonstrated in his punishments. The deluge. Alexander the Great. St. Chrysostom. God's forbearance toward you. Great danger in deferring repentance. Antiochus. St. Augustine.

When the pharisees and doctors reproached our Saviour because He received sinners kindly and associated with them, they did so from motives of envy and ill-will; at the same time their reproach was founded on fact, for the Saviour, who was come to seek and to make happy that which was lost, was untiring in His efforts when it was a question of converting a sinner. This friendliness of the Saviour toward sinners is especially consoling for us, who have offended God more or less and merit His punishment. Let our sins be as great and as numerous as the sands of the ocean,

If we return to God with a penitent and contrite heart, He will receive us again into His favor, according to His mercy and loving kindness.

We will consider this consoling truth to-day. The infinite mercy and goodness of God toward sinful men show themselves not alone therein that He forgives sinners and lavishes His blessings upon them, but it is noticeable in the punishments with which He visits them. As in the time of Noe all flesh had corrupted its way and the earth was filled with iniquity, the Lord decided to destroy the earth, with all men and all creatures thereon, and "All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood gates of heaven were opened: and the rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights." Why did it rain according to God's command forty days and forty nights? If God desired to chastise the sinful world, a day or a moment would have been amply sufficient for His omnipotence. Why, then, did He employ forty days? Before I answer this question I will tell you something that is related of Alexander the Great: When he besieged a city in time of war it was his custom, before attacking the city with fire and sword, to put a lighted torch in a prominent place, where it could be seen from the city, and to have it proclaimed by a herald

in a loud voice: "As long as the torch burns I will be merciful, but when it is burned out I shall march against the city with fire and sword."

The Lord of heaven and earth proceeded in the same way in the destruction of the world by the flood. Surely He could have inundated the whole world in a moment, and have thrown down and destroyed everything, but even "when he is angry he will remember mercy." (Heb. iii. 2.) He let it rain at first one day, and during that time He said: "I will have mercy as long as the day lasts if they are converted." He let it rain two, three, ten days, and still the earth was not covered with water, and still He said: "As long as this day lasts I will have mercy if you are converted." But because the sinful world did not profit by these days, but persevered in impenitence, finally the well-merited punishment of complete destruction of the world took place. This is the opinion, too, of St. Chrysostom, who write: "For this reason God did not destroy the world *in a moment,* but *gradually,* in forty days, to give sinful men an opportunity of being converted and doing better. But because no repentance or conversion ensued, after the expiration of the time of grace the fate they had deserved came to pass."

In a like manner does God deal with us in these days. He could punish us immediately with eternal damnation after our committing a mortal sin, but He does not do so. He gives us, rather, in His infinite mercy and goodness, time and grace to repent and reform. How often has He sent you rain, as it were. I will say, how often has He sent you trouble to tell your soul: "In this adversity you may gain mercy if you are converted!" How often has He not begun to show His anger, and to give you signs that it was time for you to return to Him, unless you wished to expose yourself to the danger of being lost eternally? You were, for example, visited with sickness, and it was brought home to you that you might at any moment die in your sins, and be lost for all eternity. Unmindful of this you live on in your sins indifferent and unrepenting, without thinking of turning over a new leaf. What do you suppose will be the result of this? Alas, the flood of eternal damnation may very likely overtake you and sweep you into the abyss of hell! Oh, may this consideration prevent us from putting off our conversion from day to day, or even, perhaps, of deferring it until our death-bed. Without doubt there were many who, driven by the

rising waters, clung to the ark in terror of approaching death, and implored Noe to open the ark and admit them. But Noe could not because God had closed the doors of the ark. And thus it is with many impenitent sinners. God casts them upon a sick-bed, or visits them with some other affliction. Their conscience tells them plainly enough the meaning of this, and urges them not to put off repentance and conversion any longer. Meanwhile they hope the affliction will pass over, or they think this sickness is not fatal, and these thoughts prevent their conversion. In the mean time, their sickness grows worse, they lose strength, and death approaches. Then they would gladly be converted, but they can not excite the right kind of repentance: the doors of grace are closed. The truth of this was experienced by the unfortunate King Antiochus. He had been a slave to sin during his entire life. When at last the hand of the Lord fell heavily upon him and terrible sufferings racked his body, he invoked the mercy of God with sighs and tears and promised to amend and make every possible satisfaction if he could only regain his health. "Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy." "Thus the murderer and blasphemer being grie- ously struck, as himself had treated others, died a miserable death, in a strange country, among the mountains." (II. Mach. ix. 13, 28.) And why did this happen? Is not God always merciful? Will a sinner not be heard upon his death-bed? What, then, was the reason that Antiochus sought in vain for mercy? St. Augustine answers, "His prayer was not answered because his repentance did not arise from his love of God, but from his desire of a longer life," and St. Jerome is of the opinion that he only then thought of repentance when he was unable to sin any longer, therefore he did not deserve to be heard. There remains, therefore, no doubt that it is most dangerous to defer conversion until the soul is about to leave this world, and that it is most advisable not to delay our conversion, but to make a sincere confession of our sins while in the fulness of our mental and physical faculties. Dear Christians, the doors of divine mercy are still open to us; we have still time to do penance and find favor before God. Let us then not put off our repentance from one day to the other, but return as soon as possible to the Lord, whom we have offended! To-day, when you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts! Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing."—Luke v. 5.

SYNOPSIS.—To-day's Gospel teaches us that a superabundance of worldly goods is likely to do injury. Sodom. Solomon. Profusion harmful. Great wealth a danger to the soul. King Midas. The Israelites. St. Ambrose. David. Be content, avoid envy, and use what wealth you possess for the glory of God and the salvation of your soul.

To labor all night and earn nothing is vexatious; to fish and not catch anything is time and trouble wasted; but to fish and to catch so many that the net breaks is no gain either. Peter experienced both of these truths. He fished all night without catching anything; then, toward morning, at the command of Christ, he threw out the net once more, and caught such an abundance of fish that the net threatened to break. Too much, therefore, is of as little benefit as too little. When one has not enough he is easily vexed and despondent and falls into many sins. When one has too much, then the net breaks; that is to say, material harm is done body and soul. This is what befell the inhabitants of Sodom, of whom the prophet Ezechiel says: "Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom, thy sister, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her and of her daughters; and they did not put forth their hand to the needy, and to the poor. And they were lifted up, and committed abominations before the Lord." (Ezech. xvi. 49, 50.) Solomon was aware of this, therefore he besought the Lord to preserve him from abundance and want. "Lord," said he, "give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life." (Prov. xxx. 8.) Superabundance is evil and is harmful for soul and body. I will explain this further to-day:

Daily experience teaches us how harmful a superabundance of the goods of this life is to our welfare. When the grain is too abundant and the ears of corn too plentiful they easily droop to earth and become rotten. When a fruit tree bears too much fruit the branches break. A ship too heavily laden goes to the bottom of the sea. Thence you can understand that a superabundance is not good, but harmful. A doctor had prescribed a very powerful drug for his patient, who was to take a spoonful at a time, but the sick man thought to himself, "If the medicine is powerful and calculated to cure me, it would be so much better for me to take it all at once, I should regain my

health so much quicker." He did this, but instead of getting better he died from its effects. This example applies to all temporal things: those who have too much run the risk of being injured in body and soul. The rich man in the Gospel had a superabundance of everything and yet he complained and said: "What shall I do, because I have not where to lay up together my fruits?" (Luke xii. 17.) And why did he complain? Because he had too much; this caused him anxiety and trouble. Too much seldom brings happiness; "for better is a little to the just," says King David, "than the great riches of the wicked." (Ps. xxxvi. 16.) It is better to catch a few fish than too many, for then the net tears easily. "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasures without content." (Prov. xv. 16.) How much trouble and care does it not cause the rich to preserve and increase their treasures? For the more a man has, the more he wants, and he is never satisfied. The cares of his earthly belongings do not allow him a quiet moment. In this way he embitters his own life and ruins his health. Others employ their superabundance of earthly possessions in sensual pleasures, in gluttony and excesses, for the satisfaction of their sensual appetites, thereby squandering their fortune and destroying their constitutions! And how many sins arise just out of this superabundance of earthly things! As from an inexhaustible spring there comes forth avarice, covetousness, hardness of heart, uncharitableness, vanity, voluptuousness, sensuality, drunkenness, forgetfulness of God, and so many other sins. The heathens recognized the danger of a superabundance of earthly possessions, and they illustrate it by the following clever anecdote: Once upon a time, when King Midas had entertained the god Bacchus in a princely manner, the latter, wishing to express his gratitude, desired Midas to ask him a favor. The king, who was very avaricious, begged that everything that he might touch would turn into gold. The favor was granted to him. From that moment everything that Midas touched was turned into gold, even the food that he desired to eat. Now Midas, with all his gold, was in a sad plight, for even his food turned into gold, and he starved to death.

How God punishes the rich and the gluttonous is shown to us by His chastisement of the Israelites. They grumbled at Moses and Aaron in the desert for having brought them out of the land of Egypt, and said: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat over the flesh-

pots and ate bread to the full: why have you brought us into this desert, that you might destroy all the multitude with famine?" (Exod. xvi. 3.) Then the Lord gave them bread from heaven—manna, as much as they required. But they were not satisfied with that; they wanted meat. Then the Lord sent them quails in abundance, and they ate their full thereof. But because of their gluttony the wrath of God descended upon them. "As yet the flesh was between their teeth, when behold, the wrath of the Lord being provoked against the people, struck them with an exceeding great plague" (Num. xi. 33), of which many died. Now you see how harmful superabundance is! St. Ambrose said: "I am suspicious when everything is about in abundance." Upon one occasion the saint entered a house, and during the meal he asked the host what were his circumstances. The latter answered, "Sir, I want for nothing. I and my family enjoy good health, and I have everything in abundance." When Ambrose heard this he departed at once, saying: "This man has a superabundance of everything; this is a bad sign, and I fear that the wrath of God will descend upon this house and destroy it." And it came to pass as the saint had foretold.

The same thing may be said of many Christians: superabundance of everything is a bad sign, and it is greatly to be feared that thou wilt be visited with God's anger on account of thy covetousness and the bad use which thou hast made of thy wealth, and that at last, in consequence of thy sins, thou will be lost eternally, for on account of thy affluence thou hast become haughty, vain, unchaste, hard-hearted, uncharitable, and forgetful of God; thou runnest the danger of dying impenitent in thy sins. Follow, therefore, my dear Christians, the advice of King David: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them" (Ps. lxi. 11), and do not forget the words of the Apostle: "For they who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snares of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (I. Tim. 6, 9.) Be content with what the Lord gives you; look not with envy upon those who have more, and strive not to acquire money and property in the wrong way! Use everything that the Lord has given you for the glory of God and the salvation of your own soul and the souls of those under your care. Oh, how sad it would be if at the end of a life spent in luxury you would have to say, with Peter: "We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing; we have been solicitous about temporal things during the

night of sin, but we have gained nothing for our poor soul!" May the Lord preserve us from this in His goodness! Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment."—Matt. v. 22.

SYNOPSIS.—Anger a great evil, and not compatible with Christian charity. The evil results of anger. What must we do to master our temper. St. Paul. Augustus. Our Saviour. The Holy Ghost. Solomon. King Saul. Try and acquire true Christian meekness.

The Gospel which we have just read is rich in instruction for us. Among other things it treats of anger and its bad effects, and it tells us the means of avoiding the same. We must remember, first of all, that we are neither Jews nor heathen, but that we are Christians, who must in all things be led by the law of charity. The Gospel teaches us that not only actual murder, but even the desire to kill some one, is sinful and punishable; that even one who is angry at his brother is deserving of severe punishment, for in these things, as in so many others, Christian charity must be more perfect than that of the Pharisees, whose righteousness was only on the surface and who did not strive after interior holiness. To-day I will speak to you

Of anger, and of a few means which should be employed to overcome it.

It is unnecessary for me to tell you what anger is and how much harm it produces, for only too frequently you allow yourselves to be overcome by it for the most trivial reasons, and repent of your rashness only when it is too late—when you can not repair the injury which you have done to yourselves or others by the inordinate violence of your temper. Anger blinds us, as many persons have unfortunately experienced; it dims our reason, and makes man like the unreasoning animal; it disturbs the peace between man and wife, between relations and neighbors, causes slander, quarrels, hatred, and enmity, frequently bodily injuries, and even murder. A bad temper undermines the health of him who gives way to it, and makes him an object of aversion to his fellow men; indeed, it

sometimes happens that a man in his rage injures himself, discovering that he can not hurt the object of his wrath. He resembles a mad dog, who, if he can not bite the person who threw the stone at him, will bite the stone until it breaks his teeth. A hot-headed man, therefore, injures himself more than he does others. In his quarrels, for instance, he may use injurious words or commit deeds which will cause trouble for him. And what happens when one of these violent men has a quarrel home? In his frenzy he damages his property and often hurts his wife or himself, and in this way he is a victim to his own blind passion. You see how anger displays itself and how much harm is done in consequence!

What must we do to master our anger? St. Paul answers, "Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath" (Rom. xii. 19), which means, if any one offends you, do not take revenge, but leave vengeance to God, who alone has the right to exercise it; give a place to your wrath and let it cool off; the longer the time between the offense and the retort the less likely will you be to commit an indiscretion. For this reason a heathen philosopher once advised the Roman emperor Augustus, who was very irascible, that he should neither speak nor act when angry until he had repeated the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet slowly and distinctly. I will give you a similar advice, my dear Christians: I advise you, when your temper is aroused by injury, an offense, or any other vexatious occurrence, not to say or do anything until you have said one "Our Father." In this way your anger will be calmed and you will not be led into uttering injurious words or committing rash deeds. To give a place and leisure to anger until it cools down is the best means of mastering our wrath and avoiding sin, which it occasions. This is what the Saviour did: "Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not." (I. Peter ii. 23.) Go, dear Christians, and do likewise!

Another means of mastering our anger and guarding against the evils which it leads to is given us by the Holy Ghost when He says: "If thou blow the spark, it shall burn as a fire: and if thou spit upon it, it shall be quenched: both come out of the mouth." (Ecclus. xxviii. 14.) From which we understand that, if any one inflamed with the fire of anger utters ugly words against you, and you should return these injurious words, the fire of anger will blaze up fiercely between you, so that it will be hardly possible to extinguish it; but

if, on the contrary, you make use of kind and soothing words toward him, his anger will be appeased and his wrath will be spent, for "a mild answer breaketh wrath," says Solomon, "but a harsh word stirreth up fury." (Prov. xv. 1.) "By patience a prince shall be appeased; and a soft tongue shall break hardness." (Prov. xxv. 15.) Oh, how many quarrels and fights, how many revilings and slanders, might be prevented if we would follow this beautiful advice, and give a mild answer to an unkind speech! How many bitter hours would be spared to married people if in all the vexatious occurrences of which the married state is not wanting they would treat one another with gentleness and avoid every unkind word! When King Saul, moved by the evil spirit, wished to kill his faithful servant David, and he found him playing softly upon the harp, he was unable to carry into effect his determination, and the evil spirit went out of him. And so will the evil spirit, the spirit of anger and revenge, depart if you return meek words of charity to your fellow men when in anger they use hard and injurious words to you, the fire of anger will be quenched within them, and will not be enkindled in you, the commandment of charity will not be ignored, and peace will not be disturbed. Let us, for the future, dear Christians, strive to restrain our anger, and to acquire true Christian meekness! To this end let us accustom ourselves at every sudden rising of our temper neither to speak nor act until we have considered for a few moments what is befitting for us to do as Christians, and when we speak let it be in the gentle tones of charity. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. v. 9.) Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"I have compassion on the multitude."—Mark viii. 2.

SYNOPSIS.—Almsgiving a source of great blessing. The money devoted to almsgiving not spent, but well invested. The Apostles miraculously rewarded when they distributed their entire store of food among the multitude. The exercise of charity to be compared to the farmer sowing his field, alms the seed sown to bring hundredfold reward. Examples: St. Paul, Alexander the Great, etc.

Our forefathers maintained that by almsgiving we do not become poor, and that what is given to God and His Church is a good invest-

ment. The truth of this was experienced by the Apostles and the four thousand people who had followed the Saviour into the desert. When the Apostles distributed their entire store of food, consisting of seven loaves and a few fish, as an alms among the hungry multitude, they did not, therefore, become poor, but, on the contrary, richer; for after all were satisfied there still remained seven basketfuls. Then, again, the four thousand people who had followed the Saviour to hear His word, and who had remained with Him for three days, did not lose anything either; for their bodies lacked nothing, and their souls were fed with the Bread of Life.

Almsgiving does not make us poor, but rich, as I will show you to-day.

To convince yourselves that almsgiving does not make us poor, but rich, I will, as an illustration, ask the farmer by what means he may grow poor or rich? He will answer, with Christ: "Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24, 25.) He will say: "If I till the field diligently, and sow abundantly, it will not be a loss to me, but a gain; the field repays a hundredfold what I sowed in it; but if I sow the field sparingly or not at all, I can not expect anything of it, and I should become poor." And so it is with the alms which we distribute among the poor and needy: it does not make us poor, but rich. The rules which the farmer follows in the sowing of his field are founded upon the natural productiveness of the earth, which frequently, in consequence of great drought or wet, or some other contrary conditions, is not fruitful; but the rule that almsgiving does not make us poor, but rich, is founded upon the Word of God, which can neither lie nor deceive. Then, what does the Word of God say about almsgiving? "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v. 7.) That is to say, God will have mercy upon them, and amply repay them, with temporal and eternal blessings, the benefits which they have shown to their brethren in want; for what they have done unto these they have done unto Himself. The poor are to us like unto a field; the more abundantly we sow it with alms, the more abundantly will it yield us fruits of grace for body and soul. The Apostle Paul, too, calls alms seed-corn, to give us to understand the reward it will bring us. "He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly: and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap in blessings." (II. Cor. ix. 6.) This is proved by daily experience. Those persons who practise works of

mercy are seldom reduced to poverty and want. The blessing of the Lord accompanies them visibly, and the saying of the Psalmist is fulfilled: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day. The Lord preserve him and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth: and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies." (Ps. xl. 2, 3.) At the time when King Alexander the Great invaded Asia with a vast army a great many tribes came and brought him the half of their possessions, begging him to accept them and in return to protect them, so that they might be able to live undisturbed and in peace. The magnanimous king answered, that he had not come to take anything away from them, but to make them wealthy and happy. Thus God will return to us the offerings made Him in the form of alms for the poor, because He needs not our gifts to feed the poor. He can care for them all without our assistance; but He wishes to see us giving alms, that we may thereby acquire the virtues of charity, mercy, and generosity, and at the same time become worthy of His love and mercy. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." A story is told of a Roman emperor who was so liberal and generous toward the poor that his courtiers were afraid he would, by his generosity, exhaust the state treasury. When having his attention called to this, he used to say: "God will not permit my treasury to want." One day, as the emperor was walking in his domains, his foot accidentally struck against a stone. Upon examining the stone more closely, he discovered that it was marked with a cross. He called his servants and ordered them to lift up the stone, as it was not fitting that the cross be trodden under foot. When the stone was raised, a second one was discovered, also marked with a cross, then a third one, and underneath that an immense treasure, with which God rewarded the generous emperor. Now, if God only rarely rewards the merciful and charitable in such a visible and extraordinary manner, still an alms which is given to the poor and needy is never lost; it always bears fruit abundantly, here or in the other world. This was known and understood by a certain rich man who had inscribed upon his gravestone: "What I gave away for temporal things, I have had, but I have it no longer; that which I collected and amassed I have lost, and others possess it; that only I possess which I distributed among the poor, as through their hands I have sent it before me to heaven." When another wealthy man was asked how great his fortune was, he replied: "One hundred

dollars." "What!" they said, "a hundred dollars?" For every one knew that his fortune ran into the thousands. The rich man made answer: "Certainly I have other possessions, but they are gifts of fortune, the possession of which depends upon so many chances that I am never sure of them for a single moment; whereas I have given one hundred dollars to the poor, and I am certain that they will be well kept, namely in God's hands, who will return them to me with interest." And so it is, my dear Christians! The hand of the poor is a fruitful field; every grain that we sow there yields fruit a hundredfold; every alms which we distribute is a capital lent to God at interest, to Him who does not permit a drink of water handed to a thirsty person to go unrewarded. Well, then, dear Christians, let us tread in the footsteps of Jesus, who went about doing good to all. The poor, the oppressed, and the unfortunate are always with us. Let us, therefore, practise charity wherever and whenever we can. Let us act upon the advice of the pious Tobias: "According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." (Tobias iv. 8-11.) Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire."—Matt. vii. 19.

SYNOPSIS.—Man is meant by the tree that yieldeth not good fruit. No distinction made on account of rank or position. Adam and Eve. Saul. The barren fig-tree. Christ does not say, Every tree that HAS not yielded good fruit, etc., nor does He say, Every tree that SHALL not yield good fruit, etc. Antiochus. The foolish virgins.

The famous ancient philosopher Pythagoras used to say, "When it thunders in the heavens, the earth is affected by it," which, in my opinion, means: "When thou observest the wrath of God, humble thyself, beg forgiveness, and endeavor to do good." To-day's Gospel contains a sentence which is calculated to fill us with fear and trembling, as would a terrific clap of thunder: "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into

the fire." Who would not be afraid, and humble himself, and seriously set out to perform works of penance, so as to escape the fate of the barren tree? That you may escape this sad fate, I wish to-day to exhort you to make resolution to perform good works and that the resolution may take root in your heart. I pray to God that He may grant you the necessary grace.

By the tree, which if it bear not good fruit is to be cut down and cast into the fire, is meant man. As a heathen philosopher puts it: "Man is a tree turned upside down. The root," he says, "that is his head, is turned toward heaven, but the branches, his hands and feet, are turned toward the earth." When the trees of the forest are to be cut down, they are carefully looked over so that some of the finest specimens may be spared. But God makes no such distinction, for the Gospel says: "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." That means, every man, whether king or beggar, great or small, rich or poor, well or sick, will be cut down by death and cast into the fire of hell if he has not yielded good fruit—namely, works of virtue and piety. What beautiful trees Adam and Eve would represent! God had formed them with His own hand, and planted them in a beautiful garden—Paradise. But because they yielded not good fruit they were taken out of Paradise. King Saul, too, in the commencement of his reign, resembled a beautiful and fruitful tree; the Holy Ghost testifies this of him: "Saul was a choice and goodly man: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he." (I. Kings ix. 2.) But soon he changed, yielded bad fruit, and was on that account cut down by death, and rejected by the Lord. The Saviour has depicted in the parable of a fig-tree, planted by a man in his vineyard and carefully attended to, the fate of those who do not yield good fruit—that is, works of virtue and piety. "And he came seeking fruit on it, and found none. And he said to the tiller of the vineyard: Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down, therefore. Why doth it take up the ground?" (Luke xiii. 6, 7.)

Furthermore, we should observe that Christ does not say, "Every tree that *has not* yielded good fruit," but He says, "that *does not* yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." If a person has led a virtuous life, and practised good works, but ceases to do good in his old age, his former good works will profit him little or nothing. Saul, for instance, as we have already seen,

was a good and pious king in the beginning of his reign, but because he forsook the path of virtue he was rejected by God. To be saved, it is not sufficient to strive after virtue and righteousness for a year or two. We must persevere in good until the end, because only "those who persevere until the end will be saved." Judas began well, but he ended badly and was lost. Paulus, or rather Saulus, was in the beginning a wicked and ungodly man, but he was converted and ended well. For this reason he was enabled to write: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me at that day." (II. Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

Again, we must observe that Christ does neither say, "Every tree that *shall not* yield good fruit," but, "that *does not* yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire," thereby rendering vain the hopes of those who imagine that in their old age, or even upon their death-bed, they will still have time to do penance and to be converted. The impious king Antiochus, on account of his vices and the cruelties he had practised upon the Jews, was visited with a terrible sickness. The eyes of his conscience were opened, and he vowed that if his health was restored to him he would offer a large amount of gold and silver at the temple at Jerusalem and would become a Jew. Nevertheless, he was not heard, and had to die the most wretched of deaths, and was lost because he had yielded no good fruit, and wanted to begin to practise penance and perform good works only then, when he was no longer able to do so. The foolish virgins were shut out from the nuptials because they wanted to buy oil for their lamps only then, when the bridegroom was already there. This is what will happen to us one day, dear Christians, if we defer our repentance and conversion from one day to another, and only then wish to begin to do good when death is already at the door. Then there will be no more time, and the heavenly Bridegroom will say to us: "I know you not."

Let us follow the advice of the wise King Solomon: "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly." (Eccl. ix. 10.) We are all trees planted in the garden of the true Church of God. But this is not sufficient to please God and to be saved; we must also yield good fruit, that is to say, works of virtue and piety, for "every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." Let us fulfil diligently all our obligations. Let us not only

promise to do good, but let us also keep this promise: "Let us do good untiringly, for in that day we shall reap, if we do not tire." Amen.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"And the same was accused unto him."—Luke xvi. 1.

SYNOPSIS.—The value of a good conscience and of a good name. A good conscience affords peace and consolation which no misfortune can disturb. St. Peter in prison. Your own experience. A stifled conscience evidence of depravity. A good name also a most precious treasure. The words of Solomon, Paul and Silas.

The steward spoken of in to-day's Gospel had, by his extravagant and unbridled life, lost the two things which are undeniably the most precious possessions of this life, namely, his good name, and his good conscience. His good name, because he was accused of having wasted his master's goods; his good conscience, because he could not justify himself when his master brought him to account. This induces me to speak to-day of these precious possessions:

I. A good conscience, and
II. A good name.

I. There is no greater happiness than that afforded us by a good conscience, and no greater misery than the reproaches of a bad conscience. The wise King Solomon expressed this truth strikingly in these few words: "The wicked man fleeth, when no man pursueth; but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread." (Prov. xxviii. 1.) A good conscience affords us peace and consolation, such as no misfortune, no oppression, no danger can disturb. For what has the just to fear? His conscience does not reproach him with sin or injustice, and for this reason he may think of God without trembling, yea, even with joy; and he can afford to face everybody without apprehension. And more than this, he need neither fear misfortune nor death, for he is in the hands of God, and "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His just." The happiness afforded by a good conscience we may observe in the Apostle Peter. Thrown in prison, the death sentence pronounced, he is to be executed the following day. But he is not in the least uneasy; on the contrary, he

sleeps so soundly that the angel who has come to deliver him is obliged to shake him so as to awaken him. Here you have a striking example of a man with a good conscience. He is quiet and consoled even in the face of death. Very different is the condition of the sinner with a bad conscience. He can not find peace or quiet anywhere. He dare not think of God, for he has offended Him, and deserves His chastisements. He can not think of death and judgment without trembling. He is afraid of his fellow men, because he believes that they can read upon his forehead the wickedness that he is guilty of. Therefore, it is said: "The wicked man fleeth, when no man pursueth." It is not necessary to look about for examples to prove the truth that a bad conscience is one of the greatest tortures. I need only remind you of your own experience. Tell me, dear Christian, how did you feel when, for the first time, you offended your God by committing grievous sin? Did not the thought of this sin, and the punishment which you deserved for it, pursue you everywhere, and cause you the greatest torment? And this torment only ceased when you became reconciled to God again through the Holy Sacrament of Penance. Many persons who live on, hardened in their sins and vices, do not feel this torment any longer; their conscience is silent to all their misdeeds. But this is evidence of depravity. Who in this congregation still has the distinction of right or wrong, and the desire to be saved, must acknowledge that a bad conscience never gives him any peace. Thence it is evident that there is no more precious possession than a good conscience. Neither money nor property, nor honors, nor pleasures, bring real happiness and contentment, but only the assurance of our conscience that we have done our duty and not offended God. With a good conscience, the poorest and most wretched man is happier than many who have money and everything in abundance but lack the good conscience.

II. After a good conscience, a good name is a most precious treasure. Solomon teaches us what a great good an honorable name is when he says: "A good name is better than great riches." (Prov. xxii. 1.) We can acquire wealth only by great labor and expenditure of time, but a good name follows a good life of its own accord, as the shadow follows the wayfarer. Good and bad men may have riches, but it is only the good man who possesses a good name, which can only be obtained through virtue. Man must part with gold and silver when he dies, but a good name follows him into eternity, and

obtains for him eternal bliss and joys. For this reason, "a good name is better than great riches," and Holy Scripture exhorts us to strive earnestly to bear a good name, saying: "Take care of a good name, for this shall continue with thee, more than a thousand treasures, precious and great." (Eccl. xli. 15.) Even the heathens thought more of a good name than of any other earthly possession, and the heathen philosopher Cato used to say: "If thou shouldst lose everything, remember to save thy good name."

For the aforesaid reasons the saints of God prized a good name above everything, and would rather endure the greatest hardships than to do anything to bring it to shame and disgrace. After Paul and Silas had been thrown into prison at Philippi, the magistrates sent word on the following day to set them free. But Paul said: "After having whipped us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, they sent us to prison; and now do they thrust us out privately? Not so; but let them come and let us out themselves." (Acts xvi. 37.) Paul demanded this for their justification and satisfaction, and insisted upon it for the honor of their good name. Behold, dear Christians, Paul and Silas would rather remain in prison than have a stain on their good name, so dear and precious was it to them.

Dear Christians, let us be just as solicitous for our good name! We shall acquire and preserve a good name if we endeavor always to have a good conscience; that is to say, if, in our actions, we do not transgress the divine commandments; if we avoid all those things whereby we offend God and disgrace ourselves in the eyes of men! Let us walk in the path of God's commandments all the days of our lives; then God will reward us with peace of heart, and our fellow men will esteem and respect us. Amen.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it."—Luke xix. 41.

SYNOPSIS.—The tears shed by Our Lord over Jerusalem, and the punishment served out to the tradespeople in the temple. Example of David weeping over the death of his children. Many of us weep over material losses, but do we weep over the loss of the grace of God? The chastisement of the tradespeople the only instance where our gentle Saviour ever showed anger. This should prove to us the enormity of the offense of desecrating the house of God.

The Gospel of to-day speaks of two facts which certainly ought to

engage our thoughts: *The tears* which the Saviour shed over the city of Jerusalem when He entered it amid the shouts and the rejoicing of the people, and *the severe punishment* with which He, who was always kindness and meekness itself, chastised the venders and money-lenders in the temple. These *two facts* will be the subject of my consideration to-day, and I hope that you will be thereby induced to strive for that which will give you peace.

1. A greater public homage had never been paid to the Saviour during His earthly life than upon that day when, amid the acclamation of the people, He made His solemn entry into the city of Jerusalem. One might think that this homage would have caused the Saviour great pleasure, whereas, as He approached Jerusalem, and saw the city, He wept over it. And why did He weep? Because He thought of the terrible punishment which would fall upon this glorious city and its inhabitants. Therefore He said: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." King David wept over three children which had been taken from him by death: over his first-born son, Ammon, who was murdered at a banquet; over Absalom, who was transpierced by Joab with three lances; and over Bethsabee's little son, who died at a tender age. After the death of the first two sons, he was inconsolable; after the death of the last, he soon ceased to weep. Why was David disconsolate after the death of his first two sons, while he was so soon consoled at the death of the last? For the reason, doubtless, that Ammon and Absalom died in their sins, and were lost, while Bethsabee's little son died an innocent child. David did not weep so much at the loss of his sons as he did over the probability of their eternal damnation. And it seems to me that Christ did not weep so much over the destruction of the city of Jerusalem as he did over the unbelievers, the blindness and obstinacy of the Jews, and the eternal damnation which they thereby brought down upon themselves.

Let us take this profoundly to heart, my dear Christians! We often are sorrowful, and perhaps weep over financial losses, or over other misfortunes, but, alas! we do not weep over the loss of the

favor and grace of God. We are inconsolable when a great misfortune befalls us, but we do not mind, and are not sorrowful if, by our sins, we lose heaven and deserve hell. Indeed, frivolous persons even laugh when, through grievous sins, they have forfeited the grace of God. And the Saviour weeps over such Christians as He once did over the inhabitants of the unfortunate city of Jerusalem, and says: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace!" My dear Christians, do we belong to the number of those over whom Christ wept? Reflect upon this, and if your conscience testifies that you are living unrepentant in your sins, remember the sad fate of the impenitent and obstinate Jews. Weep over your sins and return to God with a contrite heart, and He will have mercy upon you, and take you back into His favor.

2. It is worthy of notice, also, that Christ, when He came into the temple, began to drive out the buyers and sellers whom He found there. We read frequently in Holy Writ that Jesus wept. He wept as a little infant in the stable at Bethlehem, and on His Mother's lap; He wept at the grave of His friend Lazarus; He wept when He approached Jerusalem, and saw the city; but nowhere, except in the Gospel of to-day, do we find that Christ was exasperated and in holy anger, so that He took a scourge to drive out the violators of the sanctuary. St. Chrysostom can not sufficiently wonder at this, that the ever-gentle Saviour, who endured with patience the greatest ignominies at the hands of the Jews, should here be so greatly excited, and he adds that this took place to point out the magnitude of the injury offered to God through the desecration of His holy house. This was understood by the high priest Heli. Although he had been too indulgent toward his sons, still he could not allow the crimes which they had committed in the house of God to go unpunished, and He said to them: "If one man shall sin against another, God may be appeased in his behalf: but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him?" (I. Kings ii. 25.) But Heli's exhortation came too late. God had already decided to punish the father together with the sons; the former on account of his indulgence, and the latter because of the crimes which they had committed in the temple. There came to the gentle and merciful Saviour, during the course of His earthly life, many kinds of sinners—for instance, the adulteress, the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalen, and others—but we do not read that He was angry with them, or spoke harshly to them, much less that He laid hold of a scourge wherewith

to chastise them. On the contrary, He exhibited toward them the greatest kindness and charity, rebuked them gently for their sins, and admonished them to do better; at the same time mercifully pardoning them. But for those who, by buying and selling, and other improprieties, desecrated the temple, He had only harsh words, and He drove them forth from the sanctuary with a scourge. Hence we can see, my dear Christians, how great a sin it is, and what a severe punishment we deserve if we behave improperly in the house of God, and by unchaste thoughts, gossiping, and other unseemly conduct desecrate this sacred place.

Let us take to heart what has just been said, dear Christians, and be careful for the future not to grieve the good Saviour by any sin, nor to dishonor His holy house by improper behavior. Let us love Him who first loved us, and let us pray, in this His holy house, with devotion, so that we may be partakers of His grace and His blessing. Amen.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"This man went down into his house justified rather than the other."—Luke xviii. 14.

SYNOPSIS.—The prayer of the Pharisee and of the Publican, why the one was rejected by God and not the other. The right sort of prayer. The humble and contrite prayer obtains forgiveness of our sins. It would be wrong, however, to live a life of sin, relying upon obtaining forgiveness by an humble prayer in the hour of death. Warnings against this found in the Bible.

Of the two men who went into the Temple to pray the one considered himself just, saying: "O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," but he was rejected by God; the other one looked upon himself as a great sinner and a wretched man, and he found grace before God. He said a short prayer: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," and his prayer was granted; for "he went down into his house justified." Let us ponder to-day, why the *publican deserved that his prayer should be heard.*

The two men who went up into the Temple to pray conducted themselves in different ways. The publican remained near the door and did not venture to enter further, because he knew, that by his sins he had strayed far from God and His blessings. But the Phari-

see, the man who considered himself just and holy, and who despised his fellow man, strode forward and approached the sanctuary. The Pharisee looked about boldly and proudly while the publican lowered his eyes with humility, not venturing to look up to heaven, because he had provoked and offended God. The Pharisee extolled his own good works, saying: "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess," and passed sentence of condemnation upon the rest of mankind by adding: "O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor such as this publican." The publican, however, acknowledged and confessed his guilt penitently, struck his breast humbly, saying, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." The Pharisee asked nothing of God, he considered himself just, so that he did not require any further graces; the publican, however, so penetrated by the consciousness of his guilt, begged and implored for nothing but forgiveness of his sins. In a word, the prayer of the Pharisee was full of pride and self-praise and for this reason it was rejected; the prayer of the publican was humble and proceeded from a contrite and sorrowful heart, and for this reason it was pleasing to the Lord—and was granted, for God Himself promises: "But to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit?" (Is. lxvi. 2.)

From this comparison of the prayers of the Pharisee and of the publican, you may understand why the Saviour says: "This man (the publican) went down into his house justified rather than the other." All the almsgiving, all the fasting, all the good works of which the Pharisee boasted, did not equal the short, but humble and contrite prayer of the penitent publican, "O God, be merciful to me."

This sort of prayer is always powerful and procures for man a complete remission of sins, no matter how numerous they may be, if he says this prayer with the firm resolution of doing better; for God promised by the prophet Ezechiel: "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die." (Ez. xviii. 21.) This was experienced by the prodigal son, who when he fell humbly at his father's feet and said with contrition: "Father, I have sinned," was taken again into favor. This was David's experience likewise: for after confessing and repenting of his sins at the exhortation of the prophet Nathan,

he received the promise: "The Lord hath taken away thy sins." This was experienced by the penitent thief upon the cross, who after a contrite confession of his sins, and an humble prayer, was promised that on the same day he would be with the Saviour in Paradise. There remains therefore no doubt that an humble and contrite prayer is pleasing to God and obtains His forgiveness.

Still there may be some who say: "If God is so good and merciful that I can obtain forgiveness of my sins in so easy a manner, it is not necessary for me to humble myself to the priest and confess my sins to him. I might as well enjoy the time that is mine, for when I am dying I shall have time enough to pray with humility and contrition, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,' and then I shall be as sure of obtaining forgiveness as if I had passed my life in praying, fasting and other works of penance." Whoever thinks or speaks in this way is guilty of blasphemy, and whoever would act so would commit a sin of presumption against God's mercy, which is one of the sins against the Holy Ghost that can hardly be forgiven.

There is no doubt, that a man, who has sinned much and grievously, obtains forgiveness by a perfect act of contrition, but this contrition must be united to a firm resolution to confess those sins as soon as an opportunity presents itself. But who would be so reckless as to rely on the chance of repentance at the hour of death? Who can guarantee to himself that at the hour of death he will be as fortunate as the penitent publican or the good thief? Daily experience teaches us, that those who rely too much upon the mercy of God, and presumptuously heap sin upon sin seldom have the grace and the power to repent of their sins and to do penance. Therefore the Lord says: "Because I called, and you refused: I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction. . . . Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear." (Prov. i. 24-28.) Let us be wise, dear Christians, and let us not neglect to pray frequently and especially every night, humbly and with contrition: "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," so that should we die at night, we might find a gracious and merciful judge. Let us also add to this prayer the firm resolution of confessing our sins, and of doing better. If we make a habit of this, and strive daily to avoid sin, and to practice virtue, we may hope one day to enter justified into the house of eternity. Amen.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"And they bring to him one deaf and dumb."—Mark vii. 32.

SYNOPSIS.—The deaf and dumb man the picture of the hardened sinner, and the extraordinary efforts of Our Lord in curing him, were calculated to demonstrate the difficulty of converting the habitual sinner. St. Augustine. The Israelites. The sinner, however, need not despair, because what is impossible to man, is possible to God. St. Bernard.

It is remarkable that Christ should have taken so much apparent effort in the healing of the deaf and dumb man; He took him aside, and away from the people, then laid His fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue with spittle, and looking up to heaven, sighed, and said: *Ephpheta,* that is, Be opened, and immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed. Why did this healing require so much exertion? Could Christ not have cured the sufferer with one word, as He had so often done before? Without doubt He could have done so, but He wished to demonstrate thereby, as the interpreters of Holy Writ say, how difficult it is to convert a sinner who has for years been a slave to sin, and to whom sin has become a habit. Such a sinner resembles this deaf and dumb man; for he hears not the voice of God that calls him to repentance, and he cannot bring himself to making a humble confession of his sins.

Let us to-day treat of this habit of sin, and learn to know what we ought to do to get rid of the same. How great a power the habits of sin exercise over men we may learn from St. Augustine, who, as he relates of himself, was before his conversion so given up to evil passions, that the sin of impurity seemed to have become a necessity to him, and that he believed it was impossible for him to resist his sinful desires, and to lead a chaste life. "I was not tempted," he says, "so much by outward influences, as by my own will: the evil spirit held my will fettered and enchained." Augustine was ashamed of that ignominious slavery, with which the bad habits held him fettered, and he said to himself with sighs: How long will this scandalous and ungodly state last? Will the lust of the flesh remain forever insatiable? A voice within him answered: To-morrow! to-morrow there is yet plenty of time to be converted. At last he aroused himself, however, and said resolutely: Why not to-day? Why not at this hour? And he was converted. He threw

off the debasing fetters of bad habits, and afterward became a Saint. Therefore see, what power evil habits exercise over mankind, and how difficult it is to avoid a sin, which by frequent repetition has become a habit and therefore almost a necessity. Yes, the force of habit is so unconquerable, that man will often suffer the greatest inconvenience if he can only satisfy his habit. The Israelites for instance wanted for nothing in the desert, and yet they yearned to be back again in Egypt, that they might be able to eat the food to which they had been accustomed. They did not take into consideration the hard labor which they had been forced to do, or the heavy blows with which they had been driven to their work, like beasts of burden. Ask a drunkard why he runs the risk of poverty and want, and loss of health, by always returning to the glass as often as he has the opportunity? Ask the sensualist why, after having promised improvement, he again commits the old sins, in spite of the fact that he ruins his health, and shortens his life? St. Chrysostom replies to this question: "Habit has such power, that it holds its slaves fast, no matter how great the injury may be that arises therefrom."

Hence it is clear that it is extremely difficult for an habitual sinner to be converted and to do better. If a sick man asks the doctor's advice at the beginning of the illness, and uses remedies, it may be easy to help him; but when the malady has gained the upper hand, medical aid is often in vain! It is a similar case with sin. If one has committed a certain sin, once, twice, three times, and then has immediately returned to God by penance, sin is easily conquered, whereas if one commits the sin frequently, it takes deep root, and afterwards it is almost impossible to part with it. Therefore the Holy Scriptures tell us: "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots; you also may do well, when you have learned evil." (Jerem. xiii. 23.) How true this is, you, to whom cursing, or lying, or drinking, or impurity, or any other sin has become a habit, will readily admit. How often have you not repented of a sin, and how earnestly have you not determined to improve: but up to the present you have not yet succeeded; the good resolutions which you made yesterday, have been broken again today.

Now what ought you to do? Ought you to despair of doing better? "No," replies St. Jerome, "what is impossible to man, is possible to God. With the help of His grace, which He refuses to no one, the most hardened of habitual sinners can be converted and

can be led to do better, if he only has the good will. We see this in St. Augustine. He had amongst other things made a habit of swearing and he frequently sinned in this way. He overcame this deep rooted vice perfectly after his conversion. He said of himself: "Who amongst you have ever heard me swear now? and yet this sin had become a habit with me. But from the hour of my conversion I fought against it and in the combat I implored the Lord's assistance. And the Lord granted me aid and fortified me so that now there is no inclination in me to swear. For this reason I exhort you, my beloved, never to say: Who could forbear to do this?"

No, let us not say this any more, dear Christians! We can with the grace of God cease to sin if we only have the good will, and combat sin courageously. To attain this let us obey the precept which St. Bernard gave a sinner, who had formed the habit of cursing. He obtained a promise from him that he would refrain from cursing for three days, in honor of the Holy Trinity. After the sinner had succeeded in doing this, he extracted from him a promise not to curse for three days in honor of the Mother of God, and then a promise not to curse for three days in honor of his guardian angel. At the expiration of this the sinner said joyfully: "I succeeded in this too, now I will no longer make a truce with God for a few days, but an eternal truce." And he did so. Go and do likewise, dear Christian. Begin, after your next confession, to do what St. Bernard recommended to this sinner, and you too will successfully leave off your sinful habits and obtain the freedom of the children of God. Amen.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine."—Luke x. 34.

SYNOPSIS.—The Samaritan the type of God, who in His infinite mercy takes pity on the wretched sinner. The Samaritan's wine represents the tribulations which God sends us to awaken our conscience, and by the soothing oil is understood God's grace and forgiveness. Man forgets God in times of prosperity, but adversity brings us back to God. And He in great compassion takes mercy on us and heals the wounds with which sin and vice have afflicted our soul. Do not complain, therefore, if troubles beset you, for they are proof that God reclaims you and will save you.

The Gospel of to-day is rich in salutary teaching. We should learn from the questioner in the gospel to seek with care the salvation of our soul and to ask frequently: "What must I do to possess eternal life?" The man who fell among robbers and was so badly treated gives us a picture of the indescribable misery into which sin plunges us, and the Samaritan teaches us to be merciful, and to assist the poor and the needy to the best of our ability. We will, however, to-day only question what we are to understand by the oil and wine, poured by the Samaritan into the wounds of the injured man.

A learned theologian says that by the charitable Samaritan is understood the infinitely merciful God, who pours acrid wine and soothing oil into the wounds of sinful souls, to heal them. If He sends sickness, calamity, and misery to the hardened sinner, He sends them as an acrid and bitter, yet wholesome, medicament; if the conscience of the sinner thereby is awakened and if he does penance, the Lord heals the wounds of his soul by the soothing oil of His mercy. The parable in to-day's Gospel demonstrates to us in a distinct manner *the divine goodness and mercy,* and of this we will speak to-day.

The wayfarer who on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers, certainly deserved the sympathy which the good Samaritan extended to him; for the robbers had stripped him of his clothes, injured him, and then went away leaving him half dead. However, the sinner is far more miserable and more pitiable; for the devil, that arch fiend, has robbed him of all his possessions, for instance sanctifying grace, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, his virtues, his interior peace and his expectations of the kingdom of heaven, and inflicted many deep and painful wounds upon his soul. And while the robbers had gone away leaving the man lying there half dead, the devil does worse, because he holds the sinner in fetters, and does not give him up until One stronger than he overcomes him, and takes away his prey. O, how miserable, how lamentable is thy condition, O sinner! The hellish fiends have stripped you of everything, and wounded you, they hold you fast with the chains of hell, and you will die the eternal death, unless a good Samaritan takes pity upon you and pours oil and wine into the wounds of your soul. Behold then, God is this compassionate Samaritan; He wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. For this reason He pours first of all bitter wine into the

wounds of thy soul, that is, He sends sufferings and tribulations to invite thee thereby to reflect upon the miserable condition of thy soul, and to urge thee to do penance and to be converted.

In times of happiness and prosperity man seldom thinks of God; in times of affliction, however, he turns to Him and finds grace and mercy. King David experienced this: "In the day of my trouble I sought God, with my hands lifted up to him in the night: and I was not deceived." (Ps. lxxvi. 3.) Probably many in this congregation have had a similar experience. Acknowledge, dear Christian, when did you think more of God and pray more frevently to Him, in time of happiness or misfortune, in days of health or sickness? If you confess the truth you will acknowledge that you never sought God with greater zeal, never prayed more devoutly, never made better resolutions than in crosses and suffering, in trouble and want. On the other hand daily experience teaches us, that most people who live in luxury and have everything that their hearts desire, think seldom of God, of death, of judgment, hell and heaven, and seldom or never look after the salvation of their soul, then occurs that which was written of the people of Israel: "The people sat down to eat, and drink, and they rose up to play." (Exod. xxxii. 6.) Therefore the Spirit of the Lord says by the prophet Ezechiel (xvi. 49, 50.) of the unhappy Sodom: "Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom thy sister, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her, and of her daughters: and they did not put forth their hands to the needy, and to the poor, and they were lifted up, and committed abominations before me: and I took them away as thou hast seen." "O, how great," exclaims a saintly writer in contemplation of this, "how great is man's forgetfulness of God! As long as everything is according to their wishes, so long as they are in good health, rich, and highly esteemed, their whole thought and action, striving and struggling is directed towards the obtaining of greater and more numerous pleasures; but they do not think of God, they take no care of their soul's salvation, and their end is—perdition."

Here you see how good and compassionate God is towards us, when He, seeing us half dead from the wounds of our soul, like the good Samaritan pours the bitter wine of tribulation into the wounds of our soul, and after that, if we ask forgiveness with repentance and contrition adds thereto the soothing oil of mercy. "As silver is tried by fire," says King Solomon," and gold in the fur-

nace, so the Lord trieth the hearts, in the fire of tribulation." (Prov. xvii. 3.) The Israelites would not have besought the Lord so fervently for help and deliverance, if they had not been so severely and persistently tormented by Pharao. The impious king Manasses would never have thought of the Lord God, had he not been thrown into a dark dungeon. So many drunkards, so many adulterers, so many thieves, so many calumniators, would not have returned to God and become reconciled to Him by sincere repentance, if God had not visited them with loss of fortune or health, with crosses and misery, and thereby driven them to seek Him and to care for the salvation of their soul. "Their infirmities were multiplied," says King David, "afterwards they made haste." (Ps. xv. 4.) They did penance, and found mercy.

Be not therefore anxious and discouraged, do not murmur and complain, when the Lord visits you with affliction, but return thanks to God that He takes you to Himself and by such means heals and cleanses your poor, sinful soul. If trouble comes to you, dear Christian, remember that you are the man who on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers, wounded and left lying there half dead, but who was healed by the good Samaritan; think, that your soul has received a great many wounds by sin and vice, and the good God wishes to heal them by the bitter wine of tribulation, and the soothing oil of His mercy, and submit in humility and patience to this cure, so that your immortal soul may be preserved from everlasting death. If the Lord sends you afflictions, it is proof that He loves you and desires to save your soul. Let us then in the future kiss the hand that chastises us, and thank God, that He smites us here, to spare us in eternity. But we will also, when we feel the stroke of the Lord's chastising hand, forsake sin at once, and by a sincere repentance return to Him, that the words of the prophet may not be applied to us: "O Lord, thou hast struck them and they have not grieved: thou hast bruised them and they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return!" (Jerem. v. 3.)

Remember that, as we implore God for grace and mercy, with repentant and contrite hearts, our souls will be healed by the soothing oil of His mercy, of which He desires us all to partake. Amen.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"There met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off."—Luke xvii. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—The dangers of evil company. How difficult it is for the just to remain good in the society of the ungodly. St. Peter an example. Examples in our own midst. Young men and girls. Husbands led into intemperance, etc. Avoid, therefore, bad company.

According to the religious and civil laws in the time of Christ those who were afflicted with leprosy were made to dwell apart from the rest of mankind, that the well might not run the danger of being infected with this malady. In accordance with this order the ten lepers whom the Saviour met on the road to Jerusalem, remained afar off, raised their voices, so that He might hear them, and said: "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!" By leprosy is understood sin. We are accordingly warned that those who do not wish to be infected with the frightful disease of sin, should fly and avoid the society of the diseased, that is to say, the society of the sinner, bad company. How necessary and important it is *to avoid bad company* we shall learn further to-day.

In ancient times the question arose amongst the philosophers of Greece, as to what was the most difficult thing to overcome in the world. Many things were mentioned as the most difficult, finally one of them got up and said: "I consider that nothing is more difficult than for a good and just man to remain good among the ungodly." This man was right. For this reason such high praise is lavished in Holy Scripture upon the pious Tobias, because he, although surrounded by bad example, preserved his virtue intact. "Moreover, when all went to the golden calves, he alone fled the company of all, and kept his soul." (Tob. i. 5, 12.) How difficult it is to preserve our soul pure from sin, in the company of evil doers, we perceive in the apostle Peter. When the Saviour at the last supper foretold His disciples, that one of them would betray him and deliver him to his enemies, and that they would all be scandalized at him that night, Peter arose and said determinedly: "Though all men shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized. Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee." (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35.) "Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison, and to death." (Luke xxii. 33.) And Peter actually lived

up to his words shortly afterwards; for as Judas, the betrayer, entered the garden of Gethsemani with the soldiers, to take Jesus prisoner, Peter drew his sword, to protect his Master, and cut off the ear of Malchus. Later, however, standing with the soldiers around the fire, and a servant of the high priest looking at him closely, expressed the belief that Peter belonged also to the disciples of Christ, then he denied his Master three times, and vowed he did not know him.

What was the reason that Peter at the last supper gave most solemn promises of fidelity to his Master, and even in the garden of Gethsemani exhibited such great courage, but later on in the court of the high priest, acted so cowardly and denied his Master? There he was in the company of Jesus and the other disciples, but here he found himself in the midst of ungodly men; the society of the good spurred him on to good, but bad company led him to evil. This then confirms what the royal prophet David says: "With the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the innocent man thou wilt be innocent. And with the elect thou wilt be elect; and with the perverse thou wilt be perverted."* (Ps. xvii. 26, 27.) And it is ever thus, for as St. Chrysostom says: "It is quite natural that when the good associate with the wicked, the wicked are not improved by the good, but the good are perverted by the wicked." All men have a natural inclination to imitate what they see and hear in others, and they learn good and bad from others. But because, as Holy Scripture tells us, our heart is inclined to evil from our youth, we prefer, and learn the bad more quickly than the good. It is evident then, that bad company, is for us the greatest danger. "He that toucheth pitch," says the wise Sirach (xiii. 1), "shall be defiled with it; and he that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride." For this reason Moses calls upon the people of Israel to "Depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be involved in their sins." (IV. Moses xvi. 26.) And St. Paul exhorts most earnestly: "And we charge you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother (that is from the companionship of every brother) who lives disorderly." (II. Thess. iii. 6.) A bad man is capable of perverting many good ones to evil. Did you ever hear that a diseased sheep was restored to health by being left among the sound sheep? No, if the shepherd would not promptly isolate it, the entire flock would become diseased.

* NOTE.—These words are not applied by David in the sense in which they are used here.

Place one rotten apple with a number of good ones, and in a short while they will all be rotten.

However, to convince you of the dangers of bad company, I need only call your attention to your own experience. You have doubtless become acquainted with youths and young girls, who by their innocence and modesty were a joy to their parents, and an ornament to the community? All at once you noticed a great change in them; the roses had vanished from their cheeks, they avoided looking you in the face, they did not go to church or the sacraments as often as formerly, they shun the society of good men, and you hear many complaints about them on all sides. Whence comes this sudden change? They have been led into bad company, where they have lost their innocence and their good conduct. They are now no longer a joy to their parents and an honor to the community. They cause their parents worry and trouble, and are a shame and a scandal to the community. Alas, there are probably many fathers and mothers here who can testify that their children, whom they brought up good and pious, by associating with bad company have lost their innocence and modesty, virtue and the fear of God; there are certainly many wives here who can testify that their husbands were led into intemperance and gambling by bad company. What endless ruin is caused by bad company! If then, dear Christians, you value the salvation of your immortal soul, and your peace of heart, you will be careful not to associate with persons who lead a disorderly life, so that you may not be entangled in their sins. Let no one say: I am old enough to know how to take care of myself! If the Apostle Peter himself fell, in the company of the ungodly, who amongst us dare venture to approach the danger and imagine that he will not fall? "He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Ecclus. iii. 27.) If, however, in consequence of your position or your calling, your business or work, you are obliged to have intercourse with wicked persons, then pay no attention to their bad conversations, or their ungodly behavior, so that your soul may not be infected with the leprosy of sin. Be always on your guard, and pray daily that the Lord may strengthen you in all dangers and temptations, and preserve you from every evil. Amen.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?"—Matt. vi. 31.

SYNOPSIS.—As Pharao, during the famine in Egypt, told his subjects: go to Joseph, so are we directed by Jesus Christ to go to His Heavenly Father for our wants. We are not forbidden by His words to take proper care in order to earn and obtain the necessaries of life, for it is written, "in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread." His words, however, warn us not to be over-solicitous about worldly goods.

Once when there was a great famine in Egypt and the people went to their king Pharao and demanded bread, he directed them to his governor, Joseph, saying: Go to Joseph; he will take care of you. The Saviour in the Gospel of to-day refers all those who are anxiously solicitous about their earthly needs, and ask fearfully, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?" to His heavenly Father, and gives them the assurance that He will never abandon them, but that He will provide them with everything necessary for body and soul. The number of those who are solicitous for their own and their children's welfare, their eating and drinking, their shelter and clothing, happiness and prosperity, is not small. But be of good heart; the Saviour answers to all our complaints: "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." Let us contemplate to-day upon this consoling teaching *of a divine Providence.*

If we are told in to-day's Gospel that we shall not be solicitous about the coming day, and ask: "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?" we must not understand thereby, that we are forbidden to take the necessary care and pains for these things, but we are rebuked for our excessive care and attachment to them. For this reason the Saviour does not tell us: "You need not work," but "Be not solicitous." There are two different manners of being solicitous, says St. Anselm, one is natural, and the other unnatural, malicious, and injurious. Nature and law require that we should seek our daily bread, and look after the necessaries of life, and Christ does not forbid this, for it is written: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." (Gen. iii. 19.) Christ forbids only the too great anxiety about earthly things, whereby these things are sought after and striven for for their own sake, and not as a

means for obtaining eternal salvation, so that, in consequence, the care and possession of temporal things is preferred to the salvation of the immortal soul. Such solicitude is forbidden by the Saviour, and, therefore, He says: "No one can serve two masters. You can not serve God and Mammon." Bear in mind, says St. Jerome, Christ did not say: No one who is rich can serve God; but, no one can serve God and the world at the same time. It is one thing to be rich and have money and property, and another thing to serve Mammon. He who is not master over his money and his possessions, but is their slave: who, from early morning till late at night labors in the sweat of his brow to become richer, and who is so miserly as to be afraid to eat enough or to take lawful recreation, never gives anything to the poor and needy, he is the one who serves Mammon. To restrain us from such sinful anxiety about temporal affairs, Christ refers us to His heavenly Father, saying: "Your Father knows that you have need of all these things," as much as to say: Do not be solicitous about your food and drink, your clothing and other necessaries of life, for you have a Father in heaven who loves you tenderly, and who knows that you have need of all these things. Be of good heart, therefore, and let Him care for you. Do His will only, and He will give you everything that is necessary for you. Look at your own children! They have no cares, they are not afraid of want and privation; they are always cheerful and contented. If they are hungry they run to father or mother, and tell them their wants, and who of you would refuse their request, or would not be willing to help them if possible? Now, if even you who have a nature hardened by sin, give your children what they want, will your heavenly Father, who is justice and kindness itself, refuse you what is necessary for body and soul when you ask Him with childlike confidence? Those, however, who do not put their trust in Him, are not His children. Far be this from us, who are Christians, children of God, and heirs of His kingdom! To fortify our confidence in God and His fatherly benevolence, and to restrain us from a too great anxiety about temporal affairs, the Saviour in to-day's Gospel refers us to the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field. "Consider," He says, "the birds of the air: they sow not, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?" It is worthy of remark that the Saviour did not say: "The birds do not seek their food," but: "They sow not, nor do they reap, nor gather

into barns," thereby signifying that it is not His will that we should sit idly, expecting that God will take care of us; but that we, remembering the words, "Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly" (Job v. 7), should be diligent and active, so as to earn our daily bread, and also struggle for other temporal necessities, in such a way though that we are not over-solicitous about them, and in striving for the temporal wants of the body forget and neglect the salvation of the immortal soul. "Consider," says the Saviour further, "consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith!" Does not God feed the birds of the air, does He not even care for the flowers of the field, so much the more, then, will He care for us, who bear His image in us, and are redeemed with the precious blood of His only begotten Son? Therefore, the Saviour says: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you."

Yes, dear Christians, if we do our part, if we work diligently, and trust in God, He will not abandon us, but give us all those things that we need for body and soul. When the Pope once asked the poor St. Francis of Assisi how he supported so many Religious, although he did not own any property, St. Francis made answer: "We certainly have a poor mother on earth, but a rich Father in heaven." This is how we should feel when want and privation make their appearance, and when misfortune befalls us. We have, indeed, a poor mother, that earth which on account of the sin of our first parents is cursed, and brings forth thorns and thistles, and we must struggle for the necessities of life in the sweat of our brow; but we have a rich Father in heaven who knows our wants and is willing to help us if we only have confidence in Him, and if we ourselves do the best that is in our power. "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?" but cast all your care upon the Lord. Seek above all things the kingdom of God and His justice, then you may be sure that God will add all the other things unto you. Amen.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out."—Luke vii. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—The gospel of to-day should remind us that we all must die, and should warn us to take such precautions that at the death of the body our soul may not also suffer eternal death. Philip of Macedonia. St. John. Few people like the thought of death, yet this thought is most salutary for our salvation. The devil tries to prevent us to think of death, so that we may indulge in sinful pleasures. A legend about St. Mary Magdalen.

To-day's Gospel conducts us to the gate of the city of Naim, and allows us to witness a most touching occurrence. As the Saviour reached he gate, they were just about to carry out the corpse of one who had been the only son of his mother, a widow, and a number of persons from the city accompanied the corpse, for they sympathized sincerely with the mother's grief, who, in her son, had lost the sole support of her old age. The Saviour, too, was moved to compassion when He saw her, and He said: "Weep not." Then He advanced, touched the bier, and said: "Young man, I say, arise!" At this the dead man sat up and began to speak. And He gave him back to his mother. It is not without reason that the Church has this Gospel read to us; she desires thereby:

I.—To remind us that we all must die, and
II.—To warn us to take such precautions that at the death of the body, our soul may not also suffer eternal death.

We will reflect upon this further to-day.

I.

The pagan king Philip of Macedonia charged a youth to greet him every morning with these words: Remember, Philip, that thou art mortal! By this salutation he desired to be daily reminded of death, hoping thereby to be restrained from all impropriety. St. John, surnamed the Almoner, solicitously and frequently thought of death, and found it to his spiritual advantage to order a grave digger to come to him daily, spade in hand, to ask him: "Father, when do you want me to dig your grave?" Few persons like to think of death, and if by a sudden death of one of theirs, by a sermon, in conversa-

tion, or by some other cause, the thought that they must die enters their minds, they can not banish it too soon. But because it is salutary for us to think of death, the Church, that careful Mother of our salvation, reminds us of death and the grave, and she wishes to impress upon our memories those words of Holy Scripture: "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccles. vii. 40.) Thus she conducts us to-day to the coffin of a youth who in the springtime of life had been snatched away by death, and wishes to remind us that all men must die, and that no one, no matter whether he be young, strong, or healthy, is secure against death.

The wily Satan strives to persuade us that so long as we are well and strong, we have no need to think about death, his intention being to prevent us from leading a life of penance, and to induce us to indulge in the sinful pleasures of this life. He did this in Paradise by counseling our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit, asserting that they would not die, but be like unto God. He can not persuade us that we shall not die, for daily experience teaches us that all sorts of persons die, and that no one has ever been spared, no matter how strong, rich, or important he might have been. For this reason the artful fiend tries to instill into our minds that the hour of death is far off, and that we have yet time to enjoy the pleasures of this life without any particular danger, and that in old age, when the advance agents of death make their appearance, we shall have time enough to do penance, and to amend our lives. By such deceit the devil tries to frustrate a good preparation for death, and to bring it about that death shall surprise us at a moment when we least expect it. Therefore, dear Christian, do not listen to this serpent's fine words! Look upon the dead, whom they are carrying to the grave! He is a young man. His youth, his health and strength have not protected him from death. You have a similar experience daily. Now it is a little child, a young girl, a strong youth, a man in the prime of life, or the mother of a large family, while death often passes by a feeble old man, who would have welcomed his approach. Rely not upon your youth, your health and strength, and do not imagine that your death is far off, but think daily of death, and take the necessary precautions that at the death of your body, your soul may not die eternally!

II.

I have no need to tell you what causes the death of the soul. It is mortal sin, for the Apostle says: "The wages of sin is death."

(Rom. vi. 23.) And the royal prophet David says: "Let death come upon them, and let them go alike into hell." (Ps. liv. 16.) Woe be to those whom death snatches away in their sins! And how easily this may happen, dear Christians!

We are not safe from death from one moment to another. It comes unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. What can be more profitable for us, then, than to meditate frequently upon death, and to prepare ourselves for it without delay by leading a good life? The thought of death, the grave, and judgment caused the public sinner, Mary Magdalen, to amend at once and lead henceforth a mortified life. According to an old legend, Mary Magdalen lived for some time in the city of Naim, where she led a sinful life. One day she saw a noble youth, the only son of his mother, a widow, borne to the grave with great funeral pomp. It was still fresh in her memory that this same youth, strong and well, and handsomely arrayed, and attended by his servants, had entered her house, and as she beheld now that he, forsaken by all, was being borne to the grave in a narrow coffin to become the food of worms, she was seized with a profound grief, thought of her own death, and of the sad fate which would be hers if she should die in her sins, and she arose hurriedly, threw herself at the feet of Jesus with sorrow and contrition, found grace and mercy, and henceforth led a life of penance.

O may the thought of death have the same effect upon us! We have all sinned, and we could not pass the judgment of the Lord if death should snatch us suddenly from this earth. Let us not delay, therefore, to be converted to the Lord, and to make preparations for death. "If a master of a family did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken into. Be you also ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." (Luke xii. 39.) Do not defer your repentance from one day to the other; for you know not whether you will have the time and the grace to do penance before death comes. "A late repentance," says St. Augustine, "is seldom a good repentance." Live now, as you will wish to have lived in the hour of death. Then, although death may surprise you, you will at least not be unprepared. You will die the death of the just, and be received into the kingdom of God. Amen.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"And they were watching him."—Luke xiv. 1.

SYNOPSIS.—To-day's gospel teaches us how vain are all efforts to please men. No matter what our Lord would say or do, the Pharisees were bound to find fault with it. So it has been at all times and is now. Men will criticise and censure you, no matter what you may do. Their opinion should therefore be immaterial to you, should not influence you, nor prevent you from doing that which is right.

The Saviour had often put to shame and confusion the Pharisees before the people, but still they did not desist from setting snares for him whereby they might find fault with His words or actions. For this reason, as the Gospel of to-day informs us, one of the Pharisees had invited Him to dinner on the Sabbath, and had asked a man who was sick of dropsy, to come and ask to be healed upon the Sabbath. If our Lord would heal him, they thought, they would be able to denounce Him as a breaker of the Sabbath, and if not they would have accused Him of uncharitableness. Meanwhile the Saviour who knew their thoughts and their intentions, did not care for their opinion. He healed the sick man, notwithstanding that it was the Sabbath, unmindful of what the Pharisees might think or say, for He knew very well that it is impossible to please all men. It would be well, dear Christians if we were so minded, *and always strove to practise that which is right and just, regardless of the opinion of men, whom we can seldom please.* We will discuss this further to-day.

Even in the time of the royal prophet David, there were people who were in the habit of thinking ill of the actions of their fellow men, and to-day there are unfortunately only too many of these. "The sinner shall watch the just man," says David, "and shall gnash upon him with his teeth." (Ps. xxxvi. 12.) Take notice, that the royal prophet says: "The sinner, the ungodly, shall watch the just man," for the reason that just those very persons who are not good themselves, watch their fellow men closely, and upon the slightest offense, judge and condemn them unmercifully. Let a person be upright and honest in all his actions, and strive in every way to be honorable and just, he will still not be able to please everybody, and he will have to stand a great deal of censure and blame. Who ever led a more holy life than Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Whose

works were as just and as perfect as the works of Christ? Who was as gentle, as humble, as charitable in his intercourse with friends and enemies as Jesus Christ? And yet this wisest, most sincere, loving, holy, and just Master could not please the Pharisees and the other Jews, and He was often closely watched by them and censured. "They watched Him closely," not that they might learn to know His holy life and imitate it, but that they might catch Him in wrong speech, and then denounce Him. When He healed the dropsical man, and forgave Him his sins, they said He blasphemed God. When He exorcised the devil, they accused Him of being in league with hell, of driving out the devil through the chief devil. If He associated with publicans and sinners, if He went to eat and drink with them, they interpreted it as if He approved of their actions. They murmured and said: "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." If He cured the sick on the Sabbath, they accused Him of transgressing the law, and, therefore, He could not be a divine messenger. Thus, even Jesus, who was Himself the eternal truth and wisdom, could not please every one. "For John came, neither eating nor drinking; and they say: He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking; and they say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners." (Matt. xi. 19.) If, accordingly, neither Christ nor John could please men, how can we, weak and sinful men, be able to do so? As long as we live among men, we must expect to be misunderstood, falsely accused, and censured, for, "there are always persons," says St. Gregory, "who have a bad opinion of everything and everybody. If a person strives to be humble, they call him a hypocrite; if persons amuse themselves innocently they call them pleasure-seekers; if a person is patient, then he is called timid; if one is just, he must be intolerant; if a person is simple, he must be silly, a clever person must be cunning, a jovial person wanton, a pious person a fool or a hypocrite, one fond of society is called worldling; if one admonishes an erring brother he is presumptuous; if a person always speaks the truth, and lavishes praise or blame as they are deserved, he is called a conceited man who has no consideration for others." Thus, and in many other ways, men think and speak, and it is not in our power to please them all, nor to prevent them from putting a wrong meaning in our actions.

What, then, ought we to do, dear Christians? Ought we to be prevented by our criticisers from doing good? No, we must do what

is right and proper, what our state of life and our position demands of us, what our conscience tells us and counsels us to do. Let other people talk about it as much as they like. St. Augustine gives us this beautiful advice: "When we are praised by men we should not rejoice too much, nor be cast down when they censure us, for their wrong judgment can not damn us, nor their false praise reward us." The less a person troubles himself about the opinion of men, the more contented will he live. He who performs all his works to please God, needs not the praise of men; but he who displeases God, profits nothing, though all the world praise him. Let the people do and say what they please. With the best intentions in the world, you will never be able to please everybody. Neither did the Saviour care for the opinion of the Pharisees and Scribes, and He was not prevented thereby from doing good and lavishing His benefits whenever the opportunity presented itself. He knew well why the man with the dropsy had been ordered to be there, but regardless of this, and although it was the Sabbath, He healed him, because the curing of the sick was a good work. The Apostle Paul was of the same mind as his divine Master. "But as to me it is a thing of the least account to be judged by you, or by human judgment: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." (I. Cor. iv. 3.) St. Augustine learnt these sentiments from St. Paul, and used to say: "Think what you will of Augustine, so long as my conscience does not accuse me in the sight of God." May these sentiments be yours also, dear Christians. Do not mind the opinion of people, nor be prevented from doing good. It is immaterial what people think or say of you, if only your conscience does not reproach or censure you. If God is only satisfied with you, the condemnation of the whole world can not hurt you.

Therefore, dear Christians, I will conclude with the blessed Thomas à Kempis: Never be troubled when people watch you, censure your actions, think and speak ill of you, for you are as little able to please everybody as was Jesus, John or Paul. Remain steadfast in doing good. In its own good time everything will be brought to light, and the omniscient God will pronounce judgment upon the ungodly as well as upon the just. He will punish the wicked, but He will receive the just into His everlasting kingdom. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."—Matt. xxii. 37.

SYNOPSIS.—God wants us to love Him above anything else; we must not only declare our love with our lips, but also prove it by our actions. But many of us worship idols in our hearts beside God, the miser worships his gold, the sensual man the object of his passion, etc., etc. Remove these idols if you want to be saved.

Once, when a young student who had come to Paris to prepare himself for the priesthood, attended his first lecture, the professor took for his text the words of Holy Scripture: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." When the student heard these words he rose at once from his bench, and walked toward the door. The professor called after him, and asked him what had happened to cause his abrupt departure. "Nothing particular happened," said the student. "I went away solely because I have heard your text, and I will go and put it into practise before I listen to anything else." Thereupon he entered a religious order. In the Gospel of to-day, one of the doctors of the law asks our Saviour: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" and received the answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," etc. I wish to explain this lesson to you to-day, and I hope that, like the student, you will go and observe it in your lives.

It is worthy of remark that Jesus Christ did not say merely: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," but "Thou shalt love Him with thy whole heart." The first is self-evident, because God is our Father, and we are His children. "Is not he thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee? (Deut. xxxii. 6.) How, then, can you refuse to love Him? No, you must love Him with thy whole heart. That is, as St. Chrysostom says, thy heart must love nothing more or above God. Thou shalt not love money and goods, honor and pleasures, wife and child, yea, even life itself, more than God. The Lord is a jealous God who will not share the heart with another, but He alone must possess it. Therefore, the first commandment says: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me." And the Saviour says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with thy whole heart,* and with thy whole mind." Whosoever loves any creature more than God, places, says St. Augustine, an idol

beside Him in his heart. If that is the case, dear Christian, how many idol worshipers are there not to be found among us? Alas, many, very many, assert with their lips that they love God, but as a matter of fact, they serve false gods, which they have placed in their hearts: wealth, vanity, ambition, sensuality, and whatever other names these idols bear which they have placed upon the altar of their heart. The only true God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, demands our whole love, and can not bear that we should love any other as much or more than we love Him. Thence it is, that those who imagine that they can love God and the world at the same time, commit a great error. The words of eternal truth are plain enough: "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You can not serve God and Mammon." (Matt. vi. 24.) For this reason the Lord gave the Jews through His prophet Elias, this sharp rebuke: "How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (III. Kings xviii. 21.) The Jews heard the same thing when they were once serving the gods Baalim and Astaroth, and the prophet Samuel said to them: "If you turn to the Lord with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you, Baalim and Astaroth, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only." (I. Kings vii. 3.)

"Put away the strange gods from among you!" This is what I say to you also, my dear Christians. For there are many among you who serve strange gods, too. Tell us, O avaricious and greedy man, whom dost thou serve, God or Mammon? Thou prayest indeed, attendest divine service, confessest thy sins and receivest the sacraments, and for this reason thou imaginest that thou lovest and servest God; but thou art very much mistaken, for all thy thoughts and actions, care and endeavor are not directed to the service of God, but toward becoming rich, and if thou art asked to give an alms for the love of God, or contribution toward a good work, or hast to bear a little loss, thou art very ill at ease. Which do you love more, God or money? And what answer do you give me, O impure person, when I ask you which you love most, God or the desires of the flesh? Would you venture to say that you love God? All day long you are occupied with unchaste thoughts, desires, and imaginations. You even commit impure actions. You do not think of God. You dare not think of Him, because you know that your thoughts and

desires and deeds are a horror and an abomination in His sight, and that you deserve His chastisements. Which do you love more, God, or the lusts of the flesh? And I could ask further, vain, frivolous young girl, which do you love more, God, or your beautiful dresses, and the flattery of young men? Drunkard, which do you love more, God, or your drink? I can say, therefore, with good reason: "Put away the strange gods from among you." Put away avarice, covetousness, impurity, vanity, drunkenness, and the other gods that you serve, and for the future render to the one true God the service which you owe Him, that you may not meet with this rebuke: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me." (Is. xxix. 13.) God does not wish to be glorified by the lips alone, and He is not satisfied with assurances of love. He wants our heart, and He demands that we prove our love of Him by our thoughts, words, and deeds. He desires that we should frequently and gladly think of Him, and keep away all bad and sinful thoughts, desires, and imaginations from our hearts. He wills that we should like to talk about Him, of the truths which He has revealed, and of the glorious works of His omnipotence, goodness, and love. He wishes that we keep His commandments, for: "This is the charity of God that we keep His commandments," writes St. John (I. v. 3).

Very well, then, my dear Christians, let us love God with our whole heart! His love toward us is proved daily. He cares for us, as a good father cares for his children, and He gives us everything that we need for body and soul. He even sacrificed His only-begotten Son, when we, through the sin of our first parents, had become displeasing in His sight, had lost His favor, and our expectations of heaven, so that all that believe in Him might not be lost, but obtain life everlasting. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for us upon the cross, and He gives us in the Blessed Eucharist His flesh and His blood for our food and drink, and one day God will take us to Himself in heaven, and make us partakers of the blessings of His house. O we should be the most ungrateful of men did we not love this good God, who is all love toward us, and keep His commandments! We merit the severest chastisements if we offend Him by sin! Let us, then, love God, and show it by keeping His commandments faithfully! Heaven, with all its joys, will be our reward! Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."—Matt. ix. 2.

SYNOPSIS.—To-day's gospel should teach us that sickness is due to sin, and a punishment for our transgressions. In case of sickness we use all possible means to get cured, but we neglect our poor soul, which is mortally sick of the leprosy of sin. When falling sick we should first of all look after the condition of our soul.

Not without reason is St. Thomas Aquinas astonished that the Saviour granted to the man sick of the palsy, health of body and soul as well, whereas he was only brought to Him to be cured of his bodily sickness. "How is it," asks the Saint, "that the palsied man asked for bodily health, and the Lord granted him also the health of his soul?" Without doubt, sin was the cause of this man's sickness, and because the Saviour saw his faith and his contrition, He granted him first the remission of his sins, and after that healed his sickness. Let us consider to-day that

Sin is often the cause of illness, and learn how we ought to conduct ourselves in time of sickness.

In healing the man sick of the palsy, the Saviour dealt with him like an experienced physician, who is anxious to remove, first of all, the cause of the sickness, well knowing that then the sickness would cease of itself; for when the cause is removed, the effect ceases. If a gardener is desirous of thoroughly exterminating the weeds, it is no use for him to cut off the leaves only; he must pull up the root. Because the Saviour in His omniscience knew that sin was the cause of this man's illness, He first of all delivered him from sin, and then He cured his sickness. It is a truth frequently confirmed in Holy Scripture, that sin is often the cause of sickness. It is related in the gospel of St. John, that a sick man had lain at the pond in Jerusalem for thirty-eight years, and waited for some one to take pity upon him and dip him in the pond when the water was in motion, that he might be healed of his infirmity. In all that time nobody came to help him, until at last the Saviour came, and made him whole. When Jesus found him in the temple afterward, He said to him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse

thing happen to thee." (John v. 14.) His sickness which lasted for thirty-eight years was a punishment for his sins.

We read also in Holy Writ that Giezi, the servant of the Prophet Eliseus, was punished with leprosy on account of his covetousness; but the most terrible punishment was that with which the Prophet Elias threatened King Joram on account of his sins, when he said to him: "Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Josaphat, thy father, nor in the ways of Asa, king of Juda, but hast walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and hast made Juda and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication; moreover, also, thou hast killed thy brethren, better men than thyself: Behold, the Lord will strike thee with a great plague, with all thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy substance. And thou shalt be sick of a very grievous disease of thy bowels, till thy vital parts come out by little and little every day." (II. Par. xxi. 12-15.) There remains, therefore, no doubt but that the justice of God punishes sin with sickness. But who takes this truth to heart? Nowadays, if people fall sick, they make all kinds of conjectures as to how they could possibly have caught the sickness. Some ascribe it to a cold, others to indigestion, or to some other evil influences upon the body; but few think that, to use the words of Holy Scripture: "He that sinneth in the sight of his Maker, shall fall into the hands of the physician." (Ecc. xxxviii. 15.) Very few examine their conscience, and ask themselves whether God has not punished them with the illness from which they are suffering on account of their impurity and dissoluteness, or their cursing or blaspheming, or their intemperance and extravagance, or their vanity and luxury in clothes, or for their many other sins. If they would only reflect a little, they would soon discover and acknowledge that they deserved much worse on account of their sins.

We act very unwisely in this respect. If, after falling sick, we employ every means possible to recover our health, but do not trouble ourselves in the least about our poor soul, which is afflicted with a mortal illness, the leprosy of sin. Thus it frequently happens that all medical skill is unsuccessful, and the sickness will not yield to treatment. As long as the cause is not removed, the effects will not cease. So long as Jonas, disobeying the commands of the Lord, remained in the ship, all the means employed to save the ship from sinking were unsuccessful, but after he was thrown overboard, the storm abated, and the sea became quiet. So long as sin, the cause

of sickness, is not removed from the soul by a sincere confession, there can result no cure of the sickness. The pagan philosopher Euripides, used to say: "The illnesses which arise from the infirmities of nature, or proceed from our own fault, can be cured by the physician, but those which God sends us are cured by law." The soul must first of all be made clean and wholesome, then the healing of the sickness of the body will follow. The Saviour said first of all to the man sick of the palsy: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And then He said: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk!"

A man who had a sore finger once went to Philotimus, a celebrated physician, and asked his advice and assistance. The doctor looked at the finger, but at the man too. Then he said to him: "My friend, you complain of your finger, but you ought rather to complain about your lungs, for you have consumption. Your lungs are more important than your finger." And so it is with many persons. When they are sick, they require the advice and assistance of a physician, but they do not examine at the same time whether their soul, which is of much more importance than the body, is perhaps more sick than their body, much less do they take immediate steps to purify their souls from the leprosy of sin, so as to receive the Sacraments worthily. They spare no expense to be cured of an illness of their body, but if they are exhorted to practise good works for the salvation of their soul, it is all too difficult and too much for them to do. Only when their illness has assumed such proportions that death is imminent, do they consent to have the priest sent for, that they may receive the Sacraments. We know not how many persons die because in their illness they thought more of the doctor than they did of God and their soul's salvation, and took more pains of their bodily health than of the cleansing of their souls from sin. But we do know that the repentance of many persons is imperfect and defective, because they deferred it till the last moment of their lives, when their mind is already weak, and their will no longer in a condition to do everything that a sincere repentance requires.

Do not forget, therefore, dear Christians, that sickness is often a punishment for sin. You are not prohibited, in fact it is your duty to get the advice and assistance of a physician when you are sick, but you should take more care for the salvation of your soul than for the health of your body. Examine your conscience in time, repent of your sins, make good resolutions, practise works of penance, and purify your soul from every stain by the reception of the Sacra-

ments. Then you may hope that the Lord will also restore to you the health of your body. Should this, however, not be the case, and your illness terminate in death, you will certainly not regret having done penance in time, and to have prepared yourself for death. Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"But he was silent."—Matt. xxii. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—The wedding guest who by the presence of the King was frightened into silence, should remind us of the moment when we shall be called into the presence of the King of Heaven, to give account of our lives. The prophet Daniel fainted from fright when he beheld the angel; the soldiers in the garden of Gethsemani fell back in terror, when Jesus told them that He was the one they sought. How shall we be able to stand the sight of an offended God in all His glory and majesty? Think therefore frequently of the judgment, so that by leading a good life you will not have to be afraid to appear in the presence of your judge.

It is not difficult to understand that the wedding guest in to-day's Gospel was so frightened at the sight of the King, that he lost the power of speech and had not a word to say. He was probably a poor man, a beggar, who had perhaps never stood before his King, and it is conceivable that at sight of the King he lost his presence of mind. Queen Esther was frightened upon one occasion, and sank to the ground, when, "the King lifted up his countenance, and with burning eyes showed the wrath of his heart." (Esth. xv, 10.) It is nothing unusual for an ordinary person who enters for the first time the presence of a man in high position to lose his presence of mind, and to be unable to utter a word. Now, if we are subdued at a human being, surrounded with splendor and power, what fear and alarm will seize upon us, when one day we shall appear before Almighty God, whom we have so often provoked and offended by our sins, and are called upon to give an account of our thoughts, words and actions?

Aristotle, the most renowned Grecian philosopher, could not imagine that any one might be found not afraid of thunder and lightning. "Those claiming not to be afraid of it," he said, "are not to be considered brave but presumptuous." If this be true, then with much more reason are those to be called presumptuous and ungodly Christians who say they are not afraid to appear before the face of

their offended Judge. Therefore the Prophet Malachias thinks it hardly possible that a man could even think without fear of the Majesty of God, when as Judge He will come to demand an account of us in the presence of all the elect and the lost. "Who shall stand to see Him?" he asks. (Malach. iii. 2.) How will you stand, dear Christian, when ordered to give an account of all the gifts and graces, of the ill-spent days and hours wasted in the service of sin, of the vain thoughts, and idle words, briefly, of all your sins and sinful omissions? How will you stand when called to appear before the knowing and Almighty God, before the King of heaven and earth, as a poor, sinful, wretched man? "Who shall stand to see Him?" Once when an angel appeared to the pious Prophet Daniel, to announce to him that he, with all his people would soon be delivered from the servitude of the Persians, Daniel fell down, fainting from fright. Who then shall be able to stand at sight of the just Judge, when He comes in the clouds of heaven, with great power and majesty?

When Judas, the betrayer, came into the garden of Gethsemani with the soldiers, to take Jesus prisoner, Jesus approached them and asked, "Whom seek ye?" And when they answered: "Jesus of Nazareth," he said: "I am he." At these words they all fell back and to the ground from fright. How strange! These people had seen Him almost every day, and had heard Him preach in the Temple. He had been very friendly towards them, and now they were frightened at the words, "I am he!" These words, spoken with great dignity, reminded them forcibly of their ingratitude. The Saviour wished to say, I, who showed so much kindness to you, who taught you the way to salvation, who healed the sick, raised the dead to life again, and worked many other miracles, it is I, whom you want to take prisoner! Was it surprising that the people fell back, and sank to the earth for fear? O sinner, take this to heart! This same Jesus will one day come in great power and glory and say to you: "I, who redeemed thee with my most precious blood, I, who love thee more than a father loves his child, I, who have conferred such innumerable benefits upon thee, it is I, whom thou hast so often offended by thy sins, whom thou hast crucified anew by thy cursing and swearing, whom thou hast persecuted in thy fellow men, who are members of my body!"

"Who shall stand to see him?" Who will be able to behold Him, without, as the wedding guest in to-day's Gospel, being silent

for fear, and blushing for shame? We are even now ashamed, when our sins, faults, and shortcomings are made known: how shall we feel when at the last judgment all our thoughts, words, and works will be revealed before the whole world?

Now there are many persons who think that their secret deeds will never come to the light of day; but far from it: at the last day, says the Apostle, "the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. iv, 5.) Thou wilt then publicly behold, O sinner, the impure thoughts and desires with which thy heart was filled, and the bad actions, which thou knewest so well how to conceal from the world! In Paradise there was no one but Adam and Eve, and yet Adam, on account of the sin which he had committed, hid himself because he was ashamed. "I heard thy voice in Paradise," said Adam to the Lord, "and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." (Gen. iii, 10.) St. Augustine, in explanation of this verse, tells us that Adam was not so ignorant, simple, and foolish, as to suppose that he could escape the eye of God, but his shame was so great, that it compelled him to hide himself. If, then, Adam was ashamed to appear before God, who came as a loving father, so much more shall sinners be ashamed, when God shall come, not as a Father, but as a Judge, who will render to every one according to his works? Dear Christians! King David prayed to the Lord: "Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments. (Ps. cxviii, 120.)

Let us pray thus daily, and let us have fear of the judgment! Nothing is better suited to keep us from sinning, and to urge us to do good, than the fear of the judgment of God. Therefore the wise Sirach exhorts us (vii, 14), "In all thy works think of thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." If we think of judgment, and prepare ourselves for it by a Christian life, it will not be necessary for us to fear the hour of death, we can meet it with confidence Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"At the seventh hour, the fever left him."—John iv. 52.

SYNOPSIS.—The fever-stricken youth represents to us the soul stricken with the fever of sin. There are many of these fevers, for instance, avarice, sensuality, animosity, dishonesty, intemperance, luxury, etc. To-day I will speak of two of these malicious fevers: 1. Avarice; 2. Sensuality.

With regard to the event related to us in to-day's Gospel, we would like to ask the natural question: What are we to understand in a spiritual sense by the fever stricken son? St. Anthony of Padua answers to the question, that the soul is no less subject to different kinds of fevers than the body, and these fevers of the soul frequently cause spiritual and eternal death. We will to-day inquire as to the nature of *these injurious fevers of the soul.*

St. Ambrose enumerates different kinds of spiritual maladies. "There is a fever," he says, "that is called avarice, and those who are afflicted with it, labor from early morning till late at night, in the sweat of their brow so as to become richer. There is another fever which prevails chiefly amongst young men and women, and which ruins body and soul; it is called sensuality. There is a fever common to irascible persons, and is called the desire for revenge. Another fever is called dishonesty, another drunkenness, another luxury, and so on, and almost every man is afflicted with one or the other of these fevers, in a greater or lesser degree." As it is not possible for me to treat of all of them in the few moments now at my disposal, I will only speak of two, and these are *avarice* and *sensuality.*

1. *Avarice* is a very malicious fever, which brings death to not a few. All the other spiritual maladies are likely to decrease with time, only this one increases the older a man grows. As one afflicted with dropsy cannot quench his thirst, no matter how much he may drink, so it is with those who covet money, they never have enough, no matter how much they may possess, and they are perpetually tormented by a desire for more. Gold and silver are his gods, he worships them, places his trust in them, loves alone them, and is ready to sell his soul if it is a question of more gain. Therefore the Apostle says: "For they who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and

hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition. (1 Tim. vi, 9.) And the Saviour pronounced this terrible sentence: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix, 24.)

Tell me, dear Christian, are you subject to this fever? No, you tell me, I certainly work to support my family and to save something for times of sickness, and old age, and that also I may leave my children something, but I am not avaricious. But this is just the answer of all those who are affected with the fever of avarice and covetousness. The sensualist does not consider himself chaste, the drunkard does not claim that he is temperate, but the miser will not admit his vice; he says he is economical, when in reality he is miserly, and thus he can never be brought to know the sickness with which his soul is afflicted, and he does not amend, but dies unrepentant and in his sins. O, dear Christian, you who love gold and silver above all things, acknowledge the danger in which your soul stands! Neither money nor possessions can render you happy, virtue alone can do that. Do not strive for earthly goods, but seek diligently to become rich in good works. And if the Lord has presented you with earthly riches, or may give you some, do not set your heart upon them, but divide them cheerfully with the poor and needy. Your compassion for the poor will prove that you are the master of your money, and not that money is master over you. "According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much give abundantly: if thou have little, take care ever to bestow willingly a little." (Tob. iv, 9.)

2. Just as bad a fever as avarice is *sensuality*, that is to say, the disorderly desires after the lusts of the flesh. Those who are afflicted with this fever are given continually to impure thoughts, have all sorts of unchaste ideas and desires, are thinking perpetually how they may satisfy their disorderly passions, and they spare no means in order to attain their end. Alas, what will the unchaste not venture to do in order to satisfy their lustful desires? Neither reason, nor law, honor, nor disgrace, not even religion is strong enough to withhold them from their impure ways. Unbridled, they plunge themselves into that abyss, in which they hope to satisfy their concupiscence, and bound by the chains of sensuality they reject and even misuse the means of grace, until at last their intellect is dimmed and they begin to doubt whether their immoral actions are

really sinful, or whether there is really a hell, or a God. They remain obdurate to all exhortations, insensible to all good impressions and holy thoughts, and finally die as they have lived. Would to God, there were not so many infected with this fever of sensuality! Examine for yourselves, and you must acknowledge that my lament is well founded. Not youths and maidens alone, but men and women whose hair is already grey, whose vitality is on the wane, who have already one foot in the grave, are affected with this fever, and run the risk of everlasting death. Remember that by baptism you become members of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost! That your soul is immortal and destined for everlasting life! Let it not perish miserably from the detestable vice of sensuality! Watch and pray, fight and wrestle, to become master over this sickness! Make use of the means prescribed by the faith, receive often the holy Sacraments, think of the presence of God in the hour of temptation, and avoid the occasions of sin! Take for your example Mary, the purest of virgins, and think of the reward which God has promised to those who are pure of heart! O may we be able to say now of all those suffering from the fever of avarice and sensuality, "At that hour the fever left them!" Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me."—Matt. xviii. 32.

SYNOPSIS.—The parable of to-day's gospel teaches us that we must be steadfast in our conversion, after our sins have been forgiven to us. The servant in the parable had had his debt remitted, but when he showed himself unworthy of this grace he was punished. God punishes severely a relapse into sins, for which He had pardoned us. This is proved by his chastisement of the desecrators of the temple. We must therefore not cease to repent of our sins so that we may avoid a relapse into them.

The wise Sirach gives us a lesson worth taking to heart in these words: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven; and add not sin upon sin." (Eccl. v. 5.) This truth is made clear to us by the parable in the Gospel of to-day, and for this reason I want to point out to you to-day, *that we should unceasingly repent our past sins, and be careful not to commit new ones.*

A soldier in a certain army was found guilty of a grave fault. To escape punishment he threw himself at his general's feet, confessed his guilt, begged for mercy, and promised that it should not happen again. The general pardoned him; but warned him that in war death was the certain punishment for this offense if repeated, and that he must not expect a pardon a second time. The servant in to-day's Gospel, who owed his master ten thousand talents, and could not pay, also fell at his master's feet and begged for patience and forbearance. The master remitted the debt; but the servant immediately afterwards rendered himself culpable of a much greater fault, thereby provoking the anger of his master, and he was thrown into prison until the whole debt should be paid. When he himself had obtained pardon from his master, he found that one of his fellow servants owed him a small amount, not to be compared to the sum he owed to his master, and he seized this fellow servant and said: "Pay what thou owest me!" When the fellow servant was unable to do this, and begged for leniency, he refused, and had him cast into prison, until he should have paid the whole debt. For this cruel treatment he deserved not that mercy be shown to him any more than he had shown to his fellow servant, and punishment overtook him.

By this parable the Saviour teaches us that our sins are forgiven, if the sinner, after obtaining grace and mercy, amends and does not lead again a sinful life. If, however, he shows no real repentance and commits the old sins again, God may take away the graces already granted and not only punish the last, but also the sins committed previously. That God punishes more severely a relapse into sins which had been forgiven we see by the Saviour's treatment of the desecrators of the temple at Jerusalem. The two Evangelists, Matthew and John, describe this occurrence in different manner. St. Matthew writes: "Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all who were selling and buying in the temple; and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves, and said to them: It is written: My house shall be called the house of prayer: but you have made it a den of thieves." (Matt. xxi, 12, 13.) But St. John writes: "He (Jesus) found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, he drove them all out of the temple." (John ii, 14, 15.) St. Augustine here observes: "We

ought not to be surprised that the Evangelists relate the chastisement of the desecrators of the temple in different ways: Jesus did this twice: once He chastised the spoilers of the sanctuary with harsh words only, and this is related by St. Matthew; however, when He entered the temple shortly afterwards and found that His words had borne no fruit, He resorted to a more severe mode of punishment; he took a scourge, and drove them out of the temple. This is related by St. John. You can perceive from this that God will not be mocked, and that He employs much more severe chastisements if we commit again the same sins which He had forgiven us.

What lesson should we learn from this, dear Christians? This, that it is wiser and more salutary for us not to be without fear for those sins already forgiven, but to repent of them continually. To convince you still more of the prudence of this, I will draw your attention to the Apostle Paul. You know, that before his conversion, he persecuted the Christians in the most cruel manner. After being converted in remarkable manner from an enemy into a friend of Jesus, and received into the Church by holy baptism, he obtained the full remission of all his misdeeds; nevertheless he frequently remembered his persecution of Christians, and repented of it continually. Why did he do this? Did he doubt that his sons had been forgiven him? Not at all. He knew well that the Holy Ghost says: "Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the most High is a patient rewarder. Be not without fear about sin forgiven; and add not sin upon sin. And say not: The mercy of the Lord is great; He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners." (Ecclus. v. 4-7.) This sentence of the Holy Ghost was known to St. Paul, and therefore he never ceased to bewail his sins, and carefully avoided relapsing into them again.

Let us imitate him in this, dear Christians! We have repeatedly obtained from the Lord forgiveness of our sins, but afterwards we sinned again, and deserved severe punishment. Forget not therefore that the patience and forbearance of God may suddenly come to an end, and He may let us feel the full severity of His avenging justice. Keep your good resolutions, and never cease to bewail your sins with all your heart! This will help you to avoid sin, and to obtain the mercy of God. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

"Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. viii. 26.

SYNOPSIS.—God who sends us dangers and tribulations is also the One to help us out of them. We should therefore put implicit trust in Him. Job an example of confidence in God and submission in His holy will. No one can harm us except by permission of God. If therefore tribulations befall us we should not look for the cause, but accept them as means for our salvation. By resignation and patience in bearing our crosses we may gain from them great spiritual advantages.

The pious Job with perfect justice called the life of man upon earth a struggle, for we have continually to struggle against interior and exterior foes, in temptations and dangers, in sufferings and adversity, and there is no one upon earth who lives in perfect peace. Indeed the waters of affliction often rise so high that like the Apostles on the Lake of Genesareth, we are afraid of being swallowed up by them. Then like the Apostles, we are wanting in firm confidence in God, who not only with the best intention sends us crosses and sufferings, but can and will help us out of all dangers and tribulations. Therefore I would encourage you to-day, *to be always resigned to the will of God and to trust in Him.*

Once when the Saviour saw great multitudes about Him, He gave orders to pass over the lake of Genesareth (Matt. viii, 18) in order to escape the importunities of the people, and that He might take some rest. As the little boat left the shore a vehement storm arose, so that it was covered by the waves. The disciples were greatly afraid and thought that they would sink; but Jesus slept on, finding even amid the boisterous roaring of the sea that rest which He sought. This, says a holy writer, happened for our instruction. When we trust in the Almighty hand of God, when we unite our will to the will of God, and ask in happiness and unhappiness only that the will of God may be done, we shall have peace and rest, even when the waters of tribulation arise and threaten to engulf us. Holy Job may serve us for an example in this respect. He was most unfortunate: his sheep and oxen, his camels and asses, and all his other cattle were taken from him, his grain was burned in the fields, his house was thrown down, and his children buried in the ruins; he himself was covered with sores from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and besides

had to listen to his wife's upbraidings. If one of you, my dear Christians, had to undergo only one little part of all this adversity, there would doubtless be no end to your lamentations, but the pious Job did not permit a single complaint to escape his lips. He said, with perfect resignation to the holy will of God: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i, 21.) This is how we should behave, dear Christians, when misfortune, tribulation, or suffering overtake us, no matter how great or small they may be; we should remember that we are owned by God, and that the owner can do as he pleases with what belongs to him; we should always be content, whether things go well or ill with us, because we should be assured that everything happens according to the will of God, and that nothing can happen without His will. Everything that happens in this world happens either by God's command or with God's permission. We ignorant and short-sighted men often think that when a misfortune befalls us, this or that person is the cause of it, but far from it. Listen to the words of St. Augustine: "A man cannot do harm to another one, unless God gives him the power to do so." "Thou shouldst not have any power against me," Christ Himself said to Pilate, "unless it were given thee from above." (John xix, 11.) Neither can the devil do us any injury, unless God permits it.

If then in future tribulations come upon us, let us not spend our time in wondering whose fault it is, but let us think that God has visited us with a trial for our good and for our sanctification. God is our good Father and He will promote our temporal and eternal welfare, in blessing us as well as in smiting us; it is not for us to ask why He lavishes happiness and blessing upon us to-day, and to-morrow pours out upon us the vials of His wrath. In contemplation of the visitations of God we may be likened to a man beholding the hands of a clock moving, but, because he does not know the interior workings of the wheels, he cannot understand *why* the hands move. So do we observe the wonderful working of divine power and Providence, so do we sigh under the burden of a heavy sorrow, but the reason why God does so and not otherwise, why He sends happiness and joy to this one, and misery and affliction to that one, we neither know nor understand, and we shall never be able to fathom it, no matter how we may strive to. Only on the great day of judgment will it be re-

vealed, that God has been unjust to no one, but has given to everyone what is due to him and profitable for his salvation. Then all will praise and magnify God as with one voice, and say: "He doeth all things well!" (Mark vii, 37.) We, however, will do this now, dear Christians, even if we cannot understand why we should be made to bear so many crosses and sufferings while others, according to our opinion less deserving than we, dwell, as it were, in the shadow of good fortune and everything goes well with them; in good and evil times, in joy and sorrow we will praise and glorify God, and say: "He doeth all things well." The more resigned we are to what God sends us, and the more patiently we bear our cross, the more spiritual advantage shall we obtain from our tribulations. But if we are impatient, and murmur and complain at God, we only make our cross the greater, and not only derive no benefit therefrom, but we deserve that God chastise us more severely.

Jonah experienced the truth of this. He had received a commission from God to preach penance at Niniveh; this appeared to him too difficult, and he entered a ship in order to travel to Tharsis. This disobedience of God's commands brought its punishment with it: there was a terrific storm, Jonah was thrown into the sea, and swallowed by a whale, and at his fervent petition he was cast up upon the shore at the end of three days that he might carry out the Lord's commands. God will also in these days find ways and means to lead to humble submission to the dispositions of His providence those who rise up against His will, and murmur and complain at crosses and sufferings, and He will find means to force to submission those who are most obstinate. Let us, then, dear Christians, no longer foolishly and wickedly murmur and complain at God, but subject ourselves in all things to His most holy will, and bear patiently what He chooses to send us. Let us at the same time place our firm trust in His omnipotence and goodness. He smites indeed sometimes, but He heals again. If we exclaim confidently with the Apostles in want and trouble, "Lord, help us, we perish," He will not let our petition be unheard, for He has said: "Call upon me in the day of tribulation, and I will save you, and you shall praise my name!" Amen.

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